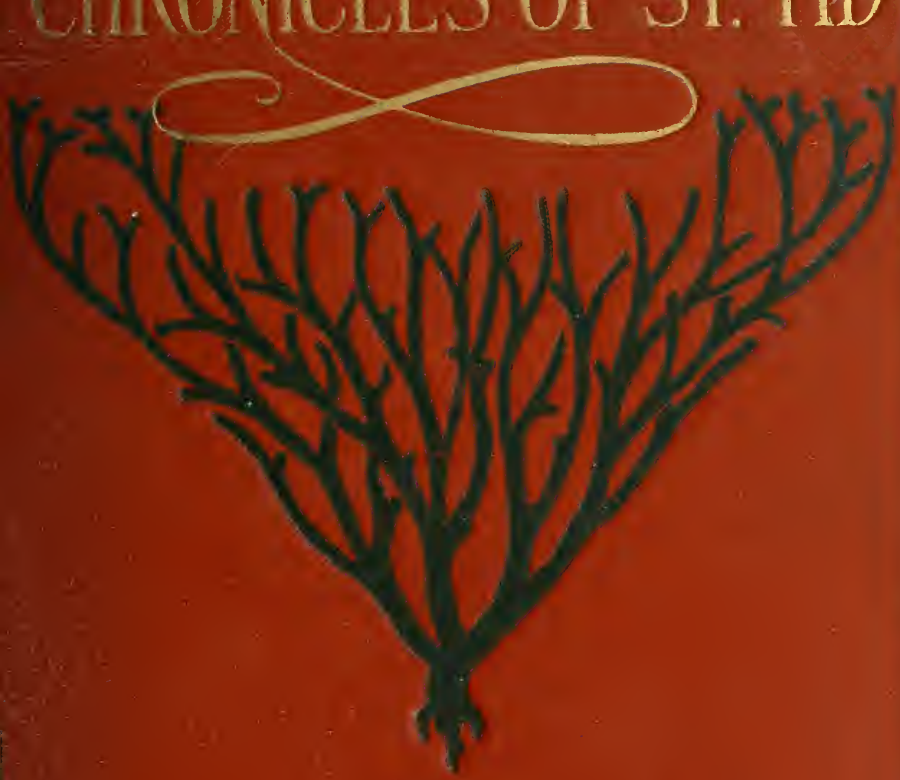
CHRONICLES OF ST. TID



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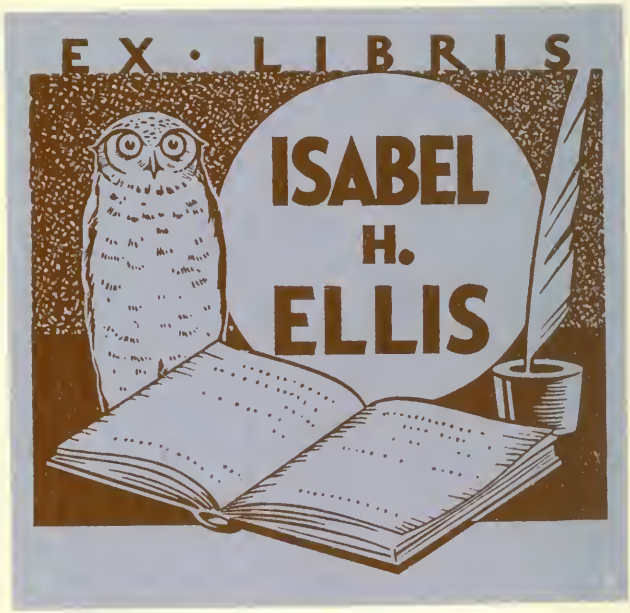
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CHRONICLES OF ST. TID

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CHRONICLES OF ST. TID

BY

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

Author of

"Old Delabole," "Brunel's Tower," etc.

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CHRONICLES OF ST. TID

CHRONICLES OF ST. TID

THE CHURCH GRIM

I

Cornwall's a place that idden very well known by foreigners, and there's many things happen there that surprise people a good deal when they hear about them. And this identical tale may well raise the hair on a person's head, for it is a savage, strange tale, in a manner of speaking, and goes far back to past time. In fact, the roots of the tale spring from another age than ours, when the folk believed in all manner of dark and doubtful contrivances that you never hear tell about now; though whether these hidden powers be still working in secret and unseen amongst us, or whether the virtue be gone out of them, or whether they've vanished off the earth altogether at the will of their Creator, be questions far beyond us common mortals to answer.

But one thing is clear as light to a thinking man, and that is that our ancient forbears, who lifted our churches, had a very different set of opinions from us, who worship in 'em to-day. I doubt they was a more religious people than us: anyway, they believed a lot of things we shy at; and though they may not have been so terrible clever as this generation, one sort of clever-

ness they certainly had which we have lost. And that was to take life easier and get more fun and happiness into their days. 'Twas machinery and Oliver Cromwell ruined "Merrie England." And the beastly machinery you can't blame, for it ain't got neither brains nor soul; so the blame must go to them rogues who cut off the King's head and played hell with this country in the name of the Lord.

We was always very proud of our church at St. Luce's. 'Tis a little, old church town a few mile from St. Tid, where the slate quarries gape in the midst of the earth; but St. Tid's church be a thing of yesterday, whereas ours of St. Luce dates back to the times of the Seventh Henry, or some such far-away age as that. 'Twas a funny old place, and stories was still handed down about it, and one fine yarn reported that a very rich and rare treasure had been hid in the church; and, of course, nobody could say it wasn't true.

But you must hear the tale because the strange story I am going to tell you hangs thereon. In fact, they be one, in a manner of speaking, and if it hadn't been for the first, the second could never have fallen out.

The lord of the Manor, when King Charles, the Martyr, reigned over us, was a hero by the name of Sir Tobias Polglaze — a famous knight who struck for the King and very near lost his life up country at Bristol, when Fairfax beat Prince Rupert. Then, seeing all was lost, Sir Tobias came back home along to Cornwall, and knew afore long that he'd be like to lose his houses and manors, if not his head. So the good knight fell to prayers, and the story went that St. Luce herself came

to him and bade the man bring his treasures to mother church and hide 'em therein safe and snug against the wrath to come. For in them wild days it was a very common thing for rich folk to leave their jewels in the keeping of the churches, because they were accounted the safest store-houses.

Whether the knight actually buried his treasures in the church at the saint's advice, or no, cannot be told, though what soon followed belongs to history, and it is set down in books how Sir Tobias Polglaze, a few weeks after that time, again fought against Fairfax in the West, and at last fell gloriously for his ruined King. They brought the man's bones back to his native land, and he was buried at St. Luce under the chancel, and the brass set upon his grave may still be read; for our last vicar, being a scholar and a very learned creature, took good care that such ancient monuments were well cherished.

So there it was, and it looked as if it might be true that Sir Tobias had obeyed the saint and hid his chief treasures in the church afore he went off to death or victory; but there was nothing to prove it, and some people believed and some did not, according to their bent of mind. Some thought the story was true, but that the precious things had doubtless been taken away after the death of Sir Tobias; while others, including the Reverend Tremayne, our parson, in the days of which I write, held stoutly to it that the treasure might be there, where Sir Toby had put it at the direction of St. Luce. His reason was a good one, you may say; because, in the first place, the knight was known to

have been a bachelor, in itself a remarkable thing in them days; for bachelor men be a modern invention, if I hear true, and in the olden times they were as rare as white crows. And they didn't bear a very good character neither, though today I could name half a score of men in this parish alone, who carry the bachelor state without suspicion and are just so respectable and well thought upon as the best of us. And in the second place, you see, Sir Toby had died a sudden death, and perhaps never had no time to tell his secrets, if he had got any. And so it seemed a fair argument that if he'd hid his treasure where St. Luce directed — doubtless a pretty cunning hiding-place — it had been done for the saint's good purpose. Of course, that purpose might have been already carried out after so many years; but the Reverend Tremayne — a very sanguine sort of man where Cornish saints were concerned — had an idea that the treasure might still be there; and he took a great pride in the story and liked to believe it, and was cruel vexed if people laughed at it as a vain invention.

So there it stood — a yarn to take or leave — and then, after so many long years, that happened to settle the vexed question and put it to rest for ever more in a very queer sort of fashion.

II

A name clings to a district like mud to a hob-nailed boot, and though Sir Tobias had been gone for hundreds and hundreds of years and his lands had passed to many

families in course of time, yet there were Polglazes still in St. Luce and round about. But they wasn't of the quality — just humble people on the land for the most part. A good few of that name worked in the quarries of St. Tid also; indeed, 'twas an everyday name in Cornwall. And we'd even got a Tobias, too, the son of Mary Polglaze; and she was a widow and he was her prop and stay.

An odd sort of chap — in fact a very unusual pattern of young man, and people couldn't believe sometimes that his blood had run through his father's veins, for the father had been a terrible, humble sort of chap, as broke stones and tacked hedges and put his mark to a document when necessary; for he never learned to read to his dying day, nor yet to write. But the boy had a brain very farways out of the common, and was a high-strung, nervy sort of chap with a hand like a gentleman and a quick way and very civil manners and a most inquiring mind. In fact, he might have made a name for himself and been the pride of his native village if he hadn't been such a lazy good-for-nought; but his nature was blended of mixed material; he weren't like his mother, nor yet his father, but a sort of throwback; and no doubt, if it had been possible to trace his havage for a few generations into the past, we should have found some remarkable character had had a hand in Toby on one side or t'other. His qualities were strong; but they balanced, and so left the man pretty much like other men.

And that was unfortunate for him, because, with all his rare cleverness, if he'd been a trier instead of a

slacker, he might have gone far; and if a lazy nature and a proper hatred of anything that looked like work hadn't counter-balanced his pride in himself and his consciousness that he was cleverer and quicker-witted than most other young fellows, none can tell where he'd have reached up to. Again, with his good brains and loose morals, he only lacked one thing to have made him a nuisance to law-abiding people. In fact, he might have been a dangerous sort of character if he'd had pluck. But he was a coward, and I believe that accident of nature stood between Toby and a good lot of wickedness. As a smart young apty-cock of a boy, he was a proper craftsman at sending the other boys through the hedge to strub the apple-trees; and he'd minch from school and find the skill and cunning every time, so long as some other young rip found the pluck. And it stood to him as he grew up, for the cowardly are cautious, and Toby always came out on the safe side of the fence both as man and boy.

People knew his ways and didn't like him over-much, for they felt there was something to him they couldn't measure. They dreaded his cleverness; but they employed him, for he was a thatcher by trade and a very clever man with reed and straw. And first-rate thatchers were coming to be a rare race of men, even in those times; so knowing that a man, whose business lies in thatching ricks and cottages, can't do much harm to the community, they kept him employed. He was an artist in a way, and he'd labour by fits and starts and do beautiful work when he was in a mind to. And if he didn't feel like it, then he wouldn't lift a finger, and

nothing would make him. He was tricky about prices, too, and you had to get your bargain in black and white with Toby, or else he'd be very like to go back on it when the work was done.

But he also had a fancy for queer, old book-larning and fansical nonsense about the old days and old places. And it was that that proved to be his best strength, for he won over Parson Tremayne from his earliest youth and got on the reverend gentleman's blind side before he'd left the Sunday school. Not that it was a very difficult thing to do, for, like many very learned men, parson was kind and trusting; and if any lad promised to make a scholar and took an interest in the church bench-ends and old stones and the inscriptions on the bells in the belfry, or any old rubbige like that, then he might be as sly and double-faced as you please, but the Reverend Tremayne would hear no word against him.

Toby Polglaze once found a splinter of flint up over on Brown Willy — the great tor that crowns they lonely, horny-winky, old moors eastward of our village. He liked to moon about up there when he was a lad, among the cairns and "long stones," though he always feared the wild-haired cattle with gert horns that roamed there, and wouldn't go nigh 'em for anything. The flint was just a little flake fashioned in shape of an arrow-head, and made by the heathen old men long afore the dawn of honest history. And being flint it couldn't perish. A rabbit scratching had thrown it out of its hole, and Toby came across it with great wonder and joy. Well, you'd think 'twas noth-

ing to make no fuss about, for if the old men shot arrows with flint heads to 'em, they was bound to come to hand again some day; but he raised a proper upstore about it and took his trash to parson, and the Reverend swore by him from that day onward. In fact, he always took his part against the parish, if need be, ever after, and made a lot more fuss than he would have made if Toby had found a coal mine, or some such useful contrivance. I do believe, after that, if young Polglaze had broke loose and knocked somebody on the head, or set fire to a wheat-rick, or what not, that Parson Tremayne would still have supported him, and held it no great odds, and reckoned most steadfast that a young youth as could bring him a heathen arrow-head from mid-most moor, must be a wonder and quite above law and order and such like everyday ideas.

He properly spoiled the thatcher, and poured his own learning into him until Toby knew everything about the church, and the ancient remains round about, and the tin-streamers' clearings on the moor, and the hut circles and barrows and the logging stones, and all the other silliness from savage times. For my part, I think such stuff better forgot; but, once led away in this manner, Tobias began to make his own discoveries, too, and took the greatest pleasure in chucking his work and showing curious things to the holiday people, who came in summer-time to see the quarries of St. Tid and King Arthur's Castle, at Tintagel, and such like wondrous sights. He got money by it, Toby did — a good penny, I reckon — for he was a mixture of the dove and

the sarpent, you might say; and when he found the flint fragments and old stone implements was worth a trifle, he always seemed to have a few on hand for any fool that would purchase them. He'd sell an ancient granite tin-mould from the moor, or a flint arrow-head, or a stone butterfly from the quarries, or a brave lot of Cornish diamonds and many other curiosities; though whether some of 'em was as ancient as they looked, only he knew.

But Vicar, he held by Toby and uplifted him tremendous as he grew to manhood. Then he'd go digging and delving with his reverence for rubbish in the tombs of the old men on the moors; and he'd read the lessons in church of a Sunday sometimes, besides taking round the alms-dish after. And all this made a better man of Tobias in some directions, no doubt, though those who knew him best were much afraid he did these holy things for business more than pleasure, and to keep in with the vicarage.

Young Polglaze was tall, slim, and lantern-jawed, with very fine black eyes, slack black hair, and a black moustache. He was a light-boned man and not sturdy and stuggy like the most of us. But he was a real good-looking chap with an air about him, though he had rather a small voice and turned his eyes away for the most part when he spoke to you. But his language was beyond anything, and he'd use book words like second nature. And he was vain as a peacock really, though he pretended not to be.

When he was up home five-and-twenty, or there-about, fate over-got Tobias in the usual fashion and he fell in love with a bowerly girl by the name of Netty Sleep.

She was Simon Sleep's only one, and he was a small farmer down Padstow way. He only rented, however, and was always hard up, and feared quarter-day worse than death or judgment.

The courting went very suent and they made a nice-looking pair, for she was straight and well set-up and comely, with rosy cheeks and a good mound of flax-white hair. Netty seemed rather well suited to the young man, too, being a bit devious and downy herself, and they had their little jokes at the expense of us every-day people, I doubt not. Besides, she was quick to see his fine parts and well-turned wrists and ankles, and she flattered him a lot, and even talked stuff about the ancient Polglaze race, and told Toby, no doubt, if it could be seen into, 'twould be found he came of very fine stock in the far past. All of which things he was very willing to credit. But Farmer Sleep proved not quite of the same mind, for he counted Netty as about his only hope, and trusted she might be good for a chimney-corner in a snug farm house some day. He was a widow-man, and knew that when he got too old to work, the Union would be his portion, unless his girl made a good match and married a husband strong enough to help him over his latter end.

But there didn't seem no great promise of no chimney-corner with Toby Polglaze, for Toby was poor himself, though some whispered he was putting by a little on the quiet. At any rate, he wasn't prepared to offer Netty anything more exciting than to share his widowed mother's cottage for the present; so Sleep turned him down short and sharp, and even went so far as to

say it was fair impudence such a poor man offered for his girl. But Netty, of course, was poor as a church mouse, too, and she wanted Tobias and meant to go to him, even if she had no more than a smicket to her back. The farmer's views weighed light with both of them, therefore; and presently the girl got talking a lot of hopeful nonsense, and the man was only too ready to believe it. They had no particular ideas; but a vague opinion, which started in her mind, found very quick root-hold in his; and then that happened to turn the opinion into a belief, and the belief into a shadowy idea for action. For such is the power of love that it makes even the weak man braver than his wont and fires the coward to take risks he'd never dream about in his everyday senses.

First, however, when he found Simon Sleep flouted him, Toby, seeing no immediate trick to get round farmer, went to his life-long friend, Parson Tremayne, in good hope to find support in that quarter and very like a bit of money, too. But he drew a blank there, much to his surprise, for the reverend gentleman, though a Christian to his toenails, was human and could be as selfish as humbler men when touched on a tender point. And he feared that Toby's great usefulness to him would be gone for ever if he took a wife and became a family man and had a woman and children round his neck. Parson was a bachelor himself, being far too taken up with old stones and old books and old saints to want a wife; and so, when he heard what Polglaze was minded to do, and how he was tokened to Netty Sleep, and how her father refused him until he could show five shillings

a week more wages, the reverend took it in a very unfavourable spirit and didn't offer Toby assistance or consolation. In fact, he turned proper ugly about it.

"This is moonshine and madness in you, Polglaze," said the good man. "Far, far too young, and, I should hope, too intelligent are you to dream of any such reckless step for many years to come. I will be no party to it; on the contrary, I protest; I forbid; I urge you, as one to whom you owe much, to put this thing away from you as a temptation of the devil. Your destiny lies on a higher plane than marriage, Tobias Polglaze; you have natural gifts of a rare order; to hide them, under such a bushel as marriage so often proves to be, would lose you my friendship and your own good conscience. Think no more of it, for nothing so unfortunate as a wife could happen to you at present. Soon you will be wise enough to know better and live to thank me for preserving you from the state."

So he got no comfort there, and more did Netty; and she, being a hot-tempered girl, took it as a personal insult to herself. So they was turning over the subject and working themselves into a very rash and reckless spirit, when a remarkable thing fell out at the church and presently landed Toby in the adventure of his life. In fact, it changed the colour of his days for ever; and some, looking ahead, said that perhaps, after all, it was good for the man and showed Providence knew his character and acted according; while others, blessed with less faith and trust in the Almighty, thought quite otherwise, and reckoned that Toby had got a bit over and above what he deserved.

For that matter, every man's lot do look unequal to human eyes. And who can say where the shoe pinches but him who wears it, and who knows the cupboard where the skeleton's hid but him that have got the key in his pocket? At any rate, there's skeletons and skeletons, and poor Toby's, when it came, was a terrible wisht, monstrous sort of skeleton, without a doubt.

III

Parson Tremayne got a legacy left to him, and told us all about it in his next sermon; for the man was open as the face of the sky and hadn't a secret in the world. His sermons were often no more than friendly talks to the parish assembled, and if he dressed us down one Sunday, so like as not he'd tell us some of his own faults the next. He never hesitated to mention man, woman, or child, by name, from the pulpit, and he'd think nothing of axing old Wesley Retallack, the clerk, a question in the middle of service, or telling us to ope, or shut the winders, or not to blow our noses so loud, or what not. He was a man who made himself one of us in church, as well as out, and he'd begin about the weather, or the crops, or the lambing season, or the pilchard fishery, and so on, and then soar to higher things by gradual degrees. And a wonderful practical man and nothing funny to him, you understand — not really — though strangers, as might be sitting under him for the first time, would often very near die of laughing, because he was that rare and uncommon, and different from other holy men. I remember once he caught sight

of Simon Sleep, and axed him right out, after the second lesson, if it was true he'd turned off young Noah Nanjulian for picking blackberries after Sunday School, and farmer answered from his place in the congregation: —

"Yes, your honour, I have done so."

"And are you wiser, Simon, than One Who let the disciples pick ears of corn on the Sabbath? No, my son, you are not," says his reverence. "I can assure you all, there's no harm for lad or maid to pick a nut or blackberry on the Lord's Day, if he, or she, has been to church and Sunday School first. And I hope, Simon Sleep, you'll reconsider it and take Noah back again."

"Certainly I will do so, and glad to, if your honour says so," replied the farmer; and with that the Vicar says, "Good for you, Simon," and goes on with the service.

So you may be sure, when he got his come-by-chance of two thousand pounds from an old friend, our parson told us all about it. And more than that, for he said how he was going to spend the windfall. And some thought he was right, but many didn't hold with the idea. And more didn't I, for two thousand pounds is a proper dollop of money — good for seventy-five pound a year for evermore in wise hands; but he was going to spend his capital, having no more use for money himself than a barn-owl.

Upon the church of St. Luce he intended to pour out his cash, and he got a faculty, or some such thing, from the Bishop, I heard tell, and set out with a light

heart to put the House of God out of winders, and turn the ancient place upside down.

"It has always been my hope and wish, though I never expected to have the power," he told us. "But now Providence, doubtless knowing the worthy purpose in my heart, has sent this loving thought of a dear old friend, at rest in the Lord; and he knew well enough to what use I should put his magnificent bequest.

"In a word, friends, I am going to restore our beautiful church, and by that I do not design to make it hideous, which restoration too often means. I shall not sweep away the noble efforts of those who raised this fane in Tudor times; but I shall destroy the horrors that sprang up here at the so-called 'restoration' of many years ago. I shall endeavour to bring back the purity of line and the chaste severity that obtained before certain misguided sons of Mulciber ruined St. Luce's in the reign of Anne — a reign architecturally distressing to all right-minded antiquaries."

That's how he let us have it; and then he told us what he was going to do; and among other things he proposed to remove a very peculiar and ancient lump of stone and mortar from which sprang one of the pillars of the nave. It was an unsightly block supposed to be a tomb; but there was nought to show it — no name or memorial stone nor nothing — and the lump, besides being an eyesore, had rather a baleful sort of repute among us. Nobody could say whyfore, yet to sit alongside it made a body feel wisht and brought bad luck; and, indeed, many wouldn't go nigh it, for people held to it some bad influence came out of it; and if any-

body got a chill in church, or a touch of rheumatics, or even the headache, you'd always find they'd been sitting by "the pile," as it was called. And some even said it meant death inside the year to sit alongside of it, and many of us wouldn't go nearer than twelve chairs off at any time. But the Reverend Tremayne gave no ear to these superstitions, and was very vexed when he heard of 'em. He had an idea about it, which he kept to himself, and he'd hear no grumbling. He often made the school children sit there, and it didn't seem to hurt them like it did the grown-ups. In fact, they liked it very well, because behind the pile they was out of sight of Parson's reading desk, and all the cheerfuller for that.

Now, however, it was hoped the unsightly lump would go, and if it hid a mystery, we were soon like to know it. But presently we learned that, far from making our church any warmer and smarter and more comfortable, as we thought the restoration meant, Vicar intended to pull down a lot of mason's work, and do away with a gallery at the west end, and open out the little north aisle, which had been walled up for a century, if not longer. Nobody wanted it, for the place was more than large enough for all who came thereto. Indeed, the Wesleyan chapels was gaining on us year after year; but the reverend gentleman had his own ideas, and they was exceeding different from ours. He told us also that there was a painting over the east end window under some ancient whitewash; and this, too, he was going to restore if it could be done. Then there was the waggon roof with bosses carved in the ancient arms of

the bygone family of Polyglaze — an airey-mouse[1] with wings outspread. For the most part they'd rotted away, but Parson knew all about 'em and was going to have 'em all carved again in fine oak. And many such-like things he was out for. In fact, the man properly let himself loose on our church, and presently, after a score of chaps got to work, and he found his money was holding out well, he sprang still more fansical notions, and started exploring the walls and probing the floors, and a lot of little games that hadn't nothing to do with restoring St. Luce's, but only wasted money and ministered to his own pleasure and curiosity. It got on the nerves of some of the old worshippers after a bit, because there was a cruel lot of dirt in the place, and the draughts came in through the holes, and the organ was stopped and the pipes took down to be cleaned, and it looked as if law and order would never come back to the holy building. In fact, we was all in a miz-maze to see such a sight. But Parson told us what was doing every Sunday, and kept hopeful as a cricket; and now and then, if a workman found a bit of wrought stone, or an old nail, or a coffin-handle, or what not, his reverence properly glowed over the pulpit cushion and cheered us up, and always threw out great hopes of what the next week might bring forth. He was more than a thought crafty over it, and whetted our appetites, and raised our drooping spirits by reminding us of the old tale of Sir Tobias and St. Luce, and declaring that, for his part, he never had said, and never would say, there was nothing in it.

[1] *Airey-mouse.* Bat.

"These oral traditions are often founded on truth," he declared to us; "and though it is the present fashion, among the young principally, to scoff at the wisdom of their forefathers and vaunt the wit of their own empty heads, yet let me tell them that the difference between youth and age is this. The young men think the old men fools; but the old men know the young men are. In a word, then, the opportunity is such that I should be disregarding my duty if I neglected to verify the ancient story, together with other profound problems our restoration enables us to solve. With respect to the treasure of Sir Tobias, we may or may not succeed in discovering it. The knight's possessions may have long been removed by our forerunners, and it may have been the privilege of an earlier generation to make good the saintly story — possibly the architects of Anne, though I should grieve to think so. On the other hand, we ourselves may be the fortunate antiquaries to establish the truth of the legend and lift it from the misty shadows of a bygone age into the frank daylight of the nineteenth century."

He rambled on like this, with such a hopeful glow on his red face and white whiskers, that a good few grew excited besides himself; though, as our clerk, Wesley Retallack, said behind his back, if he found a sackful of sovereigns and a dozen golden crowns and candlesticks, he didn't see how us of the congregation would get any benefit of it, except the fame.

"And when you're in sight of four-score, fame's but a dead leaf," said Retallack. He was never a hopeful man himself, however, and had outlived his own fame

such a devil of a long time, that he spoke what he knew.

But there was one who didn't take the clerk's opinion, nor shut himself out of the treasure by any means. In fact, a certain man began to build in secret on that rainbow gold, and though, in his sober and honest senses, no doubt Toby Polglaze might have been a long sight too sane to do any such thing, he was now betrothed, as you'll remember, to Farmer Sleep's girl, Netty. And history repeated itself, and the woman tempted him.

IV

Not her fault altogether neither; in fact, when you come to throw the blame, you can't spare parson himself, because he'd talked a lot to Tobias in his time about the ancient house of Polglaze, and told him that many and many a yeoman of Devon and Cornwall had rare good blood running in his veins and came of fine, loyal stock broke in the wars.

And Netty Sleep built on that idea, and presently she got Toby very sure about himself and very full of non-sensical notions.

"Of course, you be sprung from the ancient lords of the manor," vowed Netty. "Why, us have only to look at you to see it, and if you was in gentleman's clothes, what with your nice hands and small feet, and choice of language and larning, anybody would say you was born of the best. Without doubt, you're a set-back to the old blood, though it may have run through common people here and there," she said, "and so you've every right to reckon yourself in the line."

And all this tomfoolery was for a purpose, of course, and Tobias felt only too glad to fall in with it. She spurred him on, and presently in sober seriousness he reckoned he was the lawful heir to Sir Toby Polglaze's treasure — when and wherever it turned up. He and she soon got to believe this as gospel truth; but they took very good care not to tell other people; for they knew none else would list to such a fool's tale for a moment.

And since he very well understood he couldn't put in no such ridiculous claim, Master Toby began to cudgel his brains, and so did his maiden. He had his own ideas, but kept them close, and it weren't till afterwards that we began to remember how he was always about in the church during the alterations. It was thought the Reverend Tremayne had appointed him to look after the workmen and see nothing was taken behind his back and nought of value hidden that might come to hand during the researches; but inquiry proved this was not the case, and it turned out that Toby just gave over his thatching and invited himself to the work of poking and prying and watching the restoration of St. Luce. Of course, he was feared of his life that they'd find the treasure, and for several nights he offered to watch, so that nothing should be took behind the reverend's back; and so pleased was parson that he greatly applauded Toby for his zealous behaviour, and said he was a lesson to the other young men, not one of which would have spared an hour of their sleeping-time for such a high purpose.

So the work went on, and the Queen Anne mess was

shot out, and the people fairly rubbed their eyes to see the little north aisle — a sight long lost and new to this generation. But some of the old folk liked it not at all, because there was an echo in it that made 'em jump; and the church now being a third so big again and the evenings drawing on to December and getting mighty cold, the hotting stove and pipes proved far too weak to warm it. And some, headed by old Moses Keat, the cordwainer, got at his reverence to set up a new stove with mightier power, to keep the winter cold out of the people at worship; but he defied them, and said a stove was an abomination in his opinion, and a great sign of weakness in them who desired it.

"There's a lot too much talked about warmth and comfort in the House of God," he said in a sermon at that time, "and I want for Moses Keat and some of his friends who feel like him, to know that we do not come to St. Luce's to be warm and comfortable. Such mean pleasures are lawful enough and within the reach of all of us, thank God, Who careth for the sparrow. There's plenty of houses where we can toast our feet and ease our backs and partake of a pipe and a glass of cordial of a night; and why not, so long as we only yield to these luxuries when the day's work is done and no call of duty remains to be answered? But this — this is the terrible House of the Lord," says the Reverend Tremayne in his biggest voice, "and the man, or woman, whose thoughts wander to their feet, or their backs, or who feels a draught chilling their marrow when they ought to be waiting in fear and trembling to hear the whisper of the Still Small Voice in their hearts — such

people shall have no sympathy from me. Their faith is weak; their danger is great, and they stand in peril of a warmth, without comfort, that may endure through eternity!"

In this valiant manner he talked to us, and then, scarcely were the words out of his mouth, when he relented, and out of consideration for the weaker brethren declared that the work was nearly complete, and that by the New Year for sure all would be neat and vitty again. For flesh is grass, as well he knowed, and a lot of us, poor worms that we are, can't pray properly with a rick in the back, or a wind in our earholes, or a cold blast creeping up our legs.

The work was, in fact, very nearly done, and little more than that unsightly, suspicious thing we called "the pile" remained to be demolished. The north aisle was all right with new chairs there and all the rents in the wall made good, and the windows knocked out and glazed again; while as for the whitewash on the ancient picture of St. Luce, plastered over it by baggering scamps in the Commonwealth times, so parson said, 'twas cleaned off, and there started out upon us a very woe-begone saint, all eyes, with a body like a 'natomy, and hair like a bush, and clad in a garment like a ploughboy's smock. And most people wished the whitewash back, for the credit of the parish, and Wesley Retallack said that if that was a proper picture of St. Luce, they ought never to have painted such a wisht scarecrow of a creature. Certainly the forlorn object only made the grown-ups puzzle and the childer laugh; but his reverence set high store upon it, and raised a

brave fuss. Learned men came from far ways off to see it, and some photographed it, and some even argued against the Vicar's opinions, and grew hot about it when he flouted 'em. But none got the bettermost of him, because of course, he knew best; and them that didn't agree with him very soon went off with their tails between their legs when he broke loose upon 'em in all the wonder of his larning.

Then came in Tobias Polglaze — the live thatcher, not the dead knight. For now all was explored to the last rat-hole, and nought was left but " the pile." And there Toby most steadfastly believed would be found the treasure, though his reverence himself had given up all hope of it by now. At any rate there comed a moment when the very next day would see the mystery solved; and though Toby knew enough to understand he wouldn't find Bank of England notes and sovereigns there, he felt dead sure that precious things would appear — things he could very easy turn into cash. And cash meant marriage for him and Netty. For long before now he regarded the treasure as his own property to treat as he liked and sneak if he could.

So what he done was this: he took night-watchman's place again, and parson approved, because he had his own ideas about the pile and didn't want any risk run. In fact, he gave it out that none was to take a dig at it till he stood on the spot next day. Therefore Tobias had it all to himself in the holy building, and he chuckled, no doubt, to think on his night's work. He meant to explain next morning that, for interest and zeal, he'd

laboured by night and fetched down the side of the pile, and so got all ready for his reverence next morning. And of course if he found any valuables, his purpose was to take 'em for his own use; and then he'd be ready to tell his reverence that he'd had a good search and found the inside of the pile empty. For hollow it was: that much they knew by the sound when they struck against it.

But what happened was all very different, and Toby's plans miscarried something shocking. No less a man than the Reverend Tremayne himself told the rest of the tale — what he knew of it that was; for nobody but Netty Sleep ever heard the real truth while Tobias lived. You see the man wanted all his scanty pluck, and more, to bide that night in the church alone, with nought save a horn lantern for company; and certain it is he'd never have offered for such unkid work, without his great desire to wed and his firm belief in the treasure. But what happened to the sly toad was enough, and more than enough, to scare a born hero, I'm sure, and there's few men living in St. Luce today, and not one in Toby's days, if you except the vicar himself, who would have faced such a come-along-of-it and kept his courage, even if he kept his senses. Anyhow Toby didn't keep neither, and but for Parson Tremayne I doubt the man would never have come out alive.

You see parson, by good chance, was called to old Grandfather Nute's death-bed and Nute flickered a long time before he went. Indeed it was two of the clock and a rough winter's night, before the ancient man gave up his spirit to his Maker. After which the Reverend

went home and took the short cut through the lich-gate and among the graves. Tramping along slow and not thinking of anything but his old parishioner, parson suddenly heard a dull, heavy sound in the church, and saw a dim light through the window, and called to mind that Tobias was there. But the noise was a bit of a puzzle to him, so he walks among the graves to have a look in. 'Twas a muffled sort of hammering he heard, and it could only mean that Polglaze was exceeding instructions and doing a bit of work on his own. So parson peeped in the window, and there, sure enough, was Toby, with his lantern hung beside him, hard at work pulling down the pile! Parson grinned to see the zest of the man, who couldn't wait till morning afore this mystery; but he felt like it himself for that matter, and so he nipped round quiet to the vestry door and let himself in. He didn't want to fright Toby, for he knew he was a nervous soul, and he was just going to call out and proclaim himself, when as he stepped into the nave, round the organ, there rose up the awfullest screech that ever fell on mortal ear. 'Twas a howl as of some human that had suddenly took leave of his senses, and there was Toby creeming with fear, and yelling the roof off the church, and calling upon the saints and angels to protect him. A proper maniac, I warn you, and such was his fearful terror of mind that when parson called to him from the darkness, he took on worse than ever and thought 'twas the devil himself. Then, flying for his life, he had poor speed and catched his foot over the steps of the vamp-dish [1] nigh the west door, and

[1] *Vamp-dish.* Font.

there he lay yowling with his face to the floor till parson got to him.

V

The Reverend soon found the man was demented for the time being, and raised him up, and set him down in a pew and fetched the lantern to him. And then he called upon God to let the evil spirit out of the wretch, for it looked as if, when he broke ope the pile, something had flew from it and got into Tobias. He laughed and gibbered and went on like a woman in hysterics for twenty minutes, and then his reverence managed to sober him down and fetch a streak of sense back. By fits and gasps Toby explained that he'd just broke through the stone-work to the hollow within when what should he see but a dreadful spectrum glaring out at him!

"God's my judge, but he's there!" squeaked Tobias, "and he's the keeper of the treasure, and I've seen him, and 'tis any odds I shall die afore the year's out. Nobody could see nothing like that and live."

He whimpered and whined and swore by all the holy things he knew that he never meant to take a three-penny-piece for himself, and was only working in a proper and prayerful spirit for parson. Of course his own bad conscience made him say so, for Lord knows the other would never have accused him of any such crime. And even then parson didn't see how Tobias had gived himself away, for he kept his faith in the man to the end.

"I fear no spectrum," he said. "But I've had my opinions of the pile for many years, though I've never

voiced them, for dread of frighting the people. It may, however, be no more than some ancient gargoyle or mediaeval monster of stone. Follow me in the name of God, Tobias Polglaze, and fear no evil."

Then his reverence took the lantern and went to see for himself what had knocked the wits out of the younger man.

And he found the hollow place broke open to about the size of an oven mouth; and sure enough, staring through it, was a gashly great death's head without any eyes. A bit of hair still clung to the skull, but for the rest 'twas just a dead bone, and vicar, with his far-reaching knowledge, understood in a moment that he stood before a great treasure — though not the sort of treasure Toby thought to find. In fact, the skeleton that had shook up Tobias so bad, properly delighted Parson Tremayne; and if he'd found a barrel of gold he wouldn't have been half so pleased. Indeed, so excited was he that he set to work then and there and pulled down a bit more of the masonry himself; for Toby's limbs was turned to water; and the kick and sprawl had gone out of him, so that he could work no more.

By the lantern his reverence toiled and found a proper rogue's roost of a hole, and the skull of a man stuck on an iron nail drove through his jaws, and the rest of his bones all in a heap down under. And the reverend fairly sang praises at this horrible sight, and couldn't understand for the life of him why Toby weren't equally joyful. For he vowed 'twas the most interesting thing that had ever happened to him in his interesting career,

and, better still, the skeleton man had proved a secret opinion which he had long held.

He saw Tobias to his home, for the thatcher was still weak as a goose-chick and bivvering like a babe; and the next Sunday, of course, parson was full of the wonder. But Polglaze weren't there to hear, for they had to take him to hospital after his shaking adventure, and he bided there a good while afore he returned among us. And if the sin planned be just as bad as the sin performed, then Master Toby had earned worse than hospital and that was klink.

As for parson, he told us that for all these years we'd had a grand old church grim among us; and I dare say you mightn't know what a church grim is, for they be a branch of knowledge very much out of the common. I'm sure if we hadn't seen it with our eyes, and heard tell of its fame and powers, we never should have believed it — not one of us.

"Friends," says parson, "the mystery of 'the pile' has at last been cleared up, and those who declared that an evil and strange influence exuded from those ancient stones spoke wiser than they knew. Of old, I may tell you, the custom always was to have a watcher in every place of worship by night and day, because in the good, past days, the churches were far richer than now, and before the Reformation — which lamentable upheaval would never have occurred if I had had any voice in the matter — our own holy places were full of plate and fine linen, and silver candlesticks and golden altar vessels, and precious jewels, and many such-like things, poured into them by the pious for their souls' sakes.

So there were watch-lofts set up, in which religious and trusty men kept guard to see that thieves did not break through and steal.

"But presently," continues parson, "some ingenious and imaginative spirit, trading doubtless on the superstition of the time, bethought him that a dead watchman might be just as potent as a live one, and considerably cheaper. For in those days the belief in ghosts was general; and the people were none the worse for it. Then, therefore, there came in a fashion of church grims. They were generally the bodies of evil-doers, cut off in the midst of their sins, or put out of life by rope or axe for crimes of commission. And doubtless it was thought by Christian men of religious mind that such unruly and wicked members might thus atone in their defunct flesh for the crimes of their lives, and so obtain peace and pardon by the merciful wisdom of our Lord God, which passeth all understanding. Thus their corpses were immured, or walled up, to watch till doom and the Day of Judgment."

We listened with our eyes round and our mouths open; and for my part I reckon 'twas all done on the principle of setting a rogue to catch a rogue, and the thought of a dead spectrum after him doubtless frighted many a rascal from church-breaking, as it had Tobias Polglaze for that matter. But whether our bony hero did his work well in his own generation, who can say? Anyway, the reverend gave him Christian burial and put up a stone to the creature, after being in two minds whether he wouldn't let him stop in his old roost. But the sense of the parish was all against that; and we

were very glad to be rid of the terror from our midst.

Tobias was never the same again, and his hair went white afore he turned fifty. But out of evil came good — at least it looked so at the time; for such was the man's collapse that he couldn't sleep in his bed alone no more after that night, and for sheer gratitude to him, and quite forgetting that the church grim would have turned up next day whether or no, parson took up his case.

Iss, fay, he did; and finding how the affair had told upon him, he exalted Toby into his own service as man-of-all-work, and gave him wages enough to wed upon. He reckoned the thatcher was a martyr to learning, you see; and so the man got to wed his Netty, and as far as anybody ever heard to the contrary, he went straight as a line ever after.

Not till he came to his own death-bed, however, did he confess that he was up to no good that night, and then 'twas another than Parson Tremayne who heard the crime, for he, worthy man, had long been took to his fathers. And them that heard the truth never blamed Toby over-much, because, though at first sight it looked as though he had been rewarded for wrong-doing, yet you had to remember the price. His nerve was never stronger than a girl child's from that night; and he never had no childer, owing doubtless to the shock to his manhood; and besides that, he was heard to whisper he had no luck with his wife after all. Very likely she didn't hold herself a terrible fortunate woman either, even if she had too much spirit to tell it out.

SILVER THIMBLE FARM

Jane Tresidda had the sort of faith that goes to the roots of life and makes the soul flourish afore the sight of all men. A true, working Christian, you might say, steadfast and patient — which Lord He knows she needed to be — and with a spark of fun in her, too, which life couldn't quench. For she had that blessed gift to see that our days at their worst and hardest have always got something a thought comical to 'em; and though it don't take a great sense of fun to laugh at your neighbour's misfortunes, it do take a tidy lot to laugh at your own.

Jane Tresidda — a Pierce by birth — wedded her husband as a young maiden girl; and there's no doubt that, knowing nothing about love, she done it to please her mother — a very good reason for doing a lot of things, but doubtful when it comes to your partner for life. But so it was. Samuel Tresidda wedded late, and his keen eye had marked down Jane as a comely creature, with a lot of sense and enough cleverness to make sixpence do the work of a shilling.

His masterful will soon won over Eliza Pierce — a widow with one daughter; and when she put it to Jane — then turned eighteen — that farmer Tresidda was wishful for her to wife, Jane thought upon it and knowing nought of men and liking the strong, hard chap rather, because he had power and was a man of note

in them parts, she went into it, as innocent as a mouse into a trap, and took him.

When she was thirty-eight, she died, and didn't mind going neither. She made him a wife far better than he deserved, and her sweet temper and large patience under the affliction of a grasping, cruel and soulless partner was a very fine lesson for St. Tid and all the country round. Of course, she soon found out that Tresidda was long ways short of what she thought and hoped; and she soon found out that his idea of a wife wasn't far removed from his idea of a cow, or a beast of burden. She learnt also, as time went on, what a mean, greedy nature the man had, and how cowardly he was.

One son she bore to the farmer, and luckily for Teddy Tresidda, he favoured Jane. At least, it was both lucky and unlucky for the lad; lucky, because to be like his mother was to be made in a useful, brave and honourable pattern that promised to justify his existence; and unlucky, because his father never forgave him for being cast in a different mould from himself.

Samuel would have liked to see the boy keen about money, hard at a bargain, shrewd in all his dealings and with a mind that set cash first and the rest nowhere; so when Ted turned out quite a different order of creation — fond of a bit of sport, fond of the girls, and with a sharp sense of justice and what every man owes to his neighbours and his country, old Sam was a good bit disappointed and couldn't understand for the life of him how he came to be the father of such a chap. He was always growling and grumbling against the boy, yet he couldn't in reason find no fault, because, though he

hated Ted's easy and trustful disposition and properly detested his strict feelings about the rights of weaker men, yet he dared not make a grievance of these qualities, or expect other people to lament that his son wasn't a grasping, stingy, sour-tempered toad like his father.

Then when he was turned nineteen, his mother died, and never an unlucky lad lost his best friend at a worse moment. Jane had stood up for the boy all his life, and tempered the wind of his father's beastly nature for him, and taught him to be patient and keep his temper and see the funny side, and the sad side, too, of an elderly man living for money and caring not who suffered so long as the money came in. But when she was gone, Ted began to get a taste of what life could be, and he very soon felt that if he was to be a man and respect himself and justify his mother's blood in his veins, he'd have to cut and run and leave Silver Thimble Farm for good and all. But though dead and at peace, Jane never seemed dead exactly to Teddy. She worked on him in the properly wonderful way women can work on their children long after the grass be growed over their graves; and many and many a time, when fretted past bearing by his surly parent, the youth would think on his mother and her patience and her smiles, and so keep going and hoping for better times.

And one he had to help him, for six months before Jane went, Teddy had dared to fall in love with a very fine girl by name of Milly Jago. His father very near had a fit when he heard tell about it and said if ever Ted brought her over the threshold of home, he'd set the dogs against her. In a word, he denied and defied the

match and dared Teddy ever to name Milly Jago in his hearing. He even went over to Milly's father, Samson Jago, second foreman at St. Tid's slate quarries, and used a bit of coarse language and made a show of himself. But Samson Jago knew the man he'd got to deal with and very well understood how it was.

"You didn't ought to get in such a rage about a silly boy and girl, Mr. Tresidda," he said. "I'm sure such a thing's quite beneath your notice. You know what it is at choir practice, when the young things get singing out of the same hymn-book. Or if you don't, we chapel people do. 'Tis all in nature, and youth will be served. Milly's only eighteen and your boy but a year older, and no doubt they'll change their silly minds a score of times yet afore they find the right one. For that matter," went on Samson, "my Milly's the sort to suit you a lot better than your own child in my opinion. She's a fiery little devil with a will of her own and a heart that can be quite as hard as yours."

"Let me hear no more of it, then," answered the farmer. "And if your daughter's got sense, rub this into her, that she'll dance on my grave long afore she'll have my son; and if I hear a whisper more of it, I'll leave every stiver away from him. I was forty when I married and that's full young. 'Tis a fool's trick to think of it in youth, and my money don't go to a fool, nor yet a pair of fools."

"Never did I hear a more sensible word," said Mr. Jago; and when Tresidda had rode off on a rat-tailed, flea-bitten old mare with a temper as bad as his own, Samson laughed and went in the house and told Milly.

She was a dark, gipsy-looking girl, pretty as a picture, but with a chin and a temper. Bright brown eyes she'd got and a lovely mouth, a solid, stuggy figure, a round bosom and a strong arm.

"The game's up, Milly," says her father, winking at her. "Old boy wants me to tell you as you'll dance on his grave afore you wed your Teddy."

"No such luck, I reckon," she answered; "but I hope I shall some day. I knew he was coming: he told Ted he was. I daresay Ted will run away from Silver Thimble afore long. That'll show the pig his son puts me before his money-bags."

"Don't let Ted do nothing silly," said Samson to his girl. "Remember Jane Tresidda's gift of patience."

"I won't let Teddy do nothing mean," she answered. "He knows the sort I am, and I know the sort he is. I'm not made of milk and honey to stand being blackguarded by a godless old rip like Tresidda, and no more's Teddy. We'll wait till he's twenty-one — that's what we've ordained to do. Then, when he's a man by law, he'll have to act like a man, or I'll know the reason why."

Little she knew that in a fortnight from that day it would be up to Teddy to act like a man!

For then, like a bolt from the blue, bloody war burst upon us and we woke up one fine morning to find Germany at our throats. "Men," was the cry, for in the last resort 'tis always numbers must win the day; and so 'twas up to the British nation to come forward. And needless to say it came — the cream and pick of our manhood rose up for the old country — not because it

liked fighting, but because there weren't no choice if England and all she stood for was to win against the armed might of Germany.

" I'm off tomorrow to enlist at Launceston, father," Teddy said, cheerful as a cricket, one evening, " and the chaps of age here, twenty of 'em, are going in along with me. 'Tis lucky we've got in the hay all right, and 'tis lucky there's going to be a rare crop of wheat, though I shan't be here to help with the harvest, I'm fearing."

However, Tresidda very soon spoke his mind on that subject.

" I dare any man to leave Silver Thimble," he said. " 'Tis all noise and splutter, and this war will be over before we can look round, and I'm not going to have my autumn work upset by you excitable young folks running off just when I want you. By the time you know one end of a gun from the other the war will be ended," declared Tresidda, " so I'll thank you to stop where you are and say no more about it."

However, Teddy, for once in a way, found that there was no possible chance of seeing eye to eye with his father. In fact, he didn't try, and 'twas thanks to him the two farm hinds of right age to join the colours also went despite the master's threats.

Tresidda, finding his boy firm, swore to cut him out of his inheritance.

" Mark me," he said, " and well you know I'm the dog that bites without barking first, if you disobey and go in the Army, I turn my back on you for evermore and

fling you over. 'Tis not for the likes of you, the only son of your father, to go, and though I don't care a cuss for you and never did, because there's nothing of me in you, yet I do so far respect you as to leave what's mine to you when I die, if you obey me in all things, as I've a right to expect and demand. So now you know where you stand, and you leave me at your everlasting peril."

"There's bigger things than Silver Thimble and your money, father," said Teddy. "It looks as if Cornwall was hanging back too much from enlisting, in my opinion, and Mr. Nanjulian, the schoolmaster, says there's a lot of bad pressure being put by farmers on their men; and I'm sure you be too good an Englishman to want to see me setting a bad example for England."

"England be damned," answered Tresidda. "I pay my taxes, don't I? And if they're doubled, as seems likely, still I shall pay them. And I ain't going to argue with you, whether or no. You come to heel and don't talk to me like an equal, because you ain't, and never will be."

He had the evil trick to sting and insult folk like that, but Teddy was civil to the end. He never sauced his father back, but he did right before the people and left his home and joined the new army. In two months the man was a sergeant, and St. Tid, as heard all about him through Milly Jago, felt proud of him. And once we saw him, for there was a beat-up for recruits in our district, and Teddy came along with a battalion of fine chaps and a band; and never did I see a better set up lot of hardy young fellows than went through the vil-

lage on that occasion. By chance Tresidda was in St. Tid at the time; but he took no more notice of the splendid boys than if they'd been a flight of starlings.

"There's your son, Mr. Tresidda!" said a woman to him as they went by.

"I ain't got no son!" he snapped back at her.

Then time passed and the war went its slow, cruel way, and we heard at the turn of the year that Teddy's regiment was off to France. As for the lad's father, he minded his business and garnered his wheat, and I think he knew, almost before any of us, that prices were going to run up pretty stiff as soon as the winter came. Which they did do, and them as kept their corn in stack began to see that for honesty they ought to put it in market so quick as possible, if for gain they were tempted to hang on.

You couldn't call Samuel Tresidda a pro-German exactly, but you couldn't call him a pro-Englishman neither, nor yet even a pro-Cornishman, for the Cornish motto of "One and All" weren't anything to him at any time. But one "pro" he was, first and last and always; and that was pro-Tresidda.

The opinion of other people, of course, weren't more to him than the muck on his boot, so he went his way, and though he knew very well by February that everybody thought and said he ought to thresh his corn ricks and sell the corn, he didn't do it. And his bad example was followed by not a few other men, who ought to have known better.

Of course, nothing ever brow-beat the beggar, and

he'd come into the "Hearty Welcome" just as usual for his pint of beer or whack of whisky, and such was the fear he put into people that some of us men, so to call us, never talked about nothing to hurt Tresidda when he was present. We made up for it, no doubt, after he was gone; but in the matter of wheat, most of 'em said that to talk of wheat before him just now was much like naming sage and onions to a goose.

However, it weren't in nature we could keep off the problem of prices, and for my part I'd talk of corn as willingly before him as I would of coals or sugar. And so did Nick Nanjulian, the schoolmaster, as didn't fear him neither; and so did John Peters, who kept the "Hearty Welcome," and set no store on the custom of Tresidda, since he only took his own drink and never offered one to any man, or got one offered to him.

Just when the corn question had reached to a proper scandal and 'twas said the other farmers were climbing down and had sent for the threshing machine and were going to sell, Tresidda came in the inn where we was all hard at it, and Nanjulian was explaining the situation.

"'Tis this way," he said, "The British farmers holding up wheat are small men mostly, but in New York and Chicago there are mighty big men buying and selling for rises. The world price of wheat don't depend on us. We've got to pay it, or see the wheat go to those that will. Therefore, Tresidda here, and another round about, won't alter our fix whether they sell or not."

"'Tis the spirit, however," said Peters, "and the

spirit that holds on over forty shillings for a rise is a spirit of ill-gotten gains and an evil spirit, and Government ought to come down on such men."

"That's quite right," granted Nanjulian, "and I allow that if all these unpatriotic rogues — I say it to your face, Tresidda — sold as they should, it would be on the right side, anyway, and might do a bit to keep down the price. But when high prices are the rule and speculation is running up American wheat to a starvation figure for the poor, the right way and the quick way to make our wheat come in is for Government to use its power and regulate prices."

"And how could that be done, Nick?" I asked the man.

"By tackling freights," he answered. "Shipowners naturally take all they can get, like everybody else, and so 'tis for Government to see they get no more of this fancy money."

Tresidda laughed.

"You Socialists talk through your hats," he said. "'Tis a free country still, however, and we haven't come to the pitch when we shall be told what to grow and what to charge for it."

"When are you going to thresh? — that's the question for you, if you're an honest man," answered Nanjulian. "Socialism or no Socialism, there'll be no place for chaps like you in the new world after the war, and one thing's certain, if your wheat was took from you for a scrap of paper, as it would be in Germany, not a soul in Cornwall but would laugh to see you smart."

"'Tis you are the robber, not me," retorted farmer. "You talk like a rogue, and 'tis an abomination to think that you are teaching the children at your school. And I'd have you out of it if I could."

Then others chipped in, and we was a fair nest of hornets at Tresidda's ears; but a plucky lot he cared! In fact, I think he liked it and enjoyed to set us at loggerheads over his bare-faced opinions. It got about presently that the man was taking German money, and a whisper to boycott him gathered in St. Tid. But then that happened to switch the interests off him for a bit.

News came that Teddy Tresidda, who'd been among the first of the new army to find himself in the firing line, was wounded, and next time we met I asked farmer if 'twas true.

He looked at me scornful and answered.

"I don't know nobody by the name of Teddy Tresidda, so I can't say whether 'tis true or not."

"We thought he was your son," said I, and he shook his head.

"I've got no son, nor yet daughter," he answered.

Then Milly Jago heard from Ted, after the poor girl had suffered two days of hell, and grown pretty well light-headed, so her father told me: and Teddy asked if his father had forgiven him and if he might come home. And Jago warned his girl very serious against what she determined to do; but she had her way and done a very courageous deed.

"I can't write and tell Ted his father's not forgiven him until I know," she said, "and I won't take no

second-hand talk from the 'Hearty Welcome' about it neither, so I'm going to see the man face to face; then I'll write and tell Teddy."

And she did it, brave as a lion, and walked into Silver Thimble Farm and up to Tresidda where he sat at his dinner. He turned properly purple with rage at the sight of her, and purpler still afore she'd done.

"I only want a word with you," she said, "and you can give me a civil answer, or not, as you mind to. Your son, my sweetheart, Teddy — he's wounded in the shoulder, and he'll come back to England in a fortnight from now, and he's wishful to know if you've forgiven him, and if he can come home-along for me to nurse him well again?"

He scowled and clutched his knife, but she weren't feared, and kept her black, scornful eyes on the man and gave him look for look.

"Get out of this, you imperent young whelp, or, girl as you are, I'll give you a good hiding!"

That's what he said to her, and she said:

"Then you haven't forgiven him?"

"Forgive him!" he cried out. "I'd see him blown to dust by German guns afore I'd forgive him. He's less to me than the crust of my bread, and I wish he was filling a nameless grave at this minute, for his body will do more good under the earth than ever it will on top of it."

She flared up at that.

"You beast!" she cried out. "If the German bullet have let your blood out of Teddy, so much the better

for him. You vile dog to say such things of a man that's too good to breathe the same air with you! Curse you, you evil blight — him falling for his country and you hoarding your grain, though God knows anything that went through your foul hands would be like to poison the man that ate it after!"

With that he lost his temper and flung his knife at her where she stood, a proper tragedy queen, by the door. If it had gone home there'd have been a pretty story to tell Ted Tresidda presently, but it missed Milly's neck by six inches and stuck all a-quiver in the dern of the door.

"You snake," she said, white with rage and looking as if she'd fly at him; "you brutal, cowardly wretch, you'll pay for that, and if God don't smite you for it, the devil shall!"

Very like a young witch she looked as she said it, and the woman that kept house for Tresidda and was there at the time, told me after that a nest of vipers couldn't have hissed out the threat fiercer than what Milly did.

She was gone afore Tresidda could answer, and there's no doubt that either her words, or alarm at what he'd very nearly done in his rage, kept the master of Silver Thimble pretty low.

We didn't see him for a week; then wheat was up to fifty shillings, and he the only man in our parts still holding on. For a bit we had a spell of rare wet weather, with rain rolling in off the Atlantic and properly drowning North Cornwall, so he couldn't have threshed if he'd wanted to; but then came March and

brave drying winds and everything right for the business.

Meantime, Samson Jago, greatly daring, had told Teddy Tresidda by the hand of Milly that, though his father didn't own him no more, he might come to his future father-in-law as soon as ever he liked. And it was understood that when Teddy was well enough, he should find a home along with the Jagos at St. Tid.

Yet, so strange are the ways of Providence, that when Teddy did come back in a hospital ship to Southampton only ten days later, it was to Silver Thimble Farm down by the cliffs he went, after all, and not to his sweetheart's home.

For a lot may happen in ten days where you've got determined wills working; and a lot did happen.

And more happened to Milly Jago than most, and still more befell farmer Tresidda, but what happened to the girl came from her own nature, where terrible things was working now, and what happened to Tresidda came from without, and the man that would hear no human voice was called to listen to a louder.

Milly, I must tell you, felt properly outraged by what the old rascal had done to her, and none blamed her for that; but she wanted to go a good step further and hit back.

She said the old rip had aimed at her life, and she commanded her father to have the law of him and get him put away in prison for a bit, to show him that he couldn't go flinging knives at young women that way; but Samson, he was ever an easy man, who didn't know how to nurse his rage and keep it warm, and though at

first he talked of going over and breaking farmer's neck for him, he soon calmed down and did no such thing.

"A miss is as good as a mile," he said, "and to the likes of that man no doubt your speech was punishment enough; and, whether or no, we're going to have Teddy here come presently, and that'll sting the wretch more than anything we can do against him, if his own conscience don't."

Milly was savage about it, however, and went on her own to Lawyer Pierce — a relation of Teddy's on his mother's side. But Pierce, though Milly didn't know it, was used to do a lot of little odd jobs for Tresidda, and he tried to calm her down and explain that old men will be cranky, and strongly advised her for the sake of her future to let sleeping dogs lie.

He felt kindly enough to the girl and kinder still to Teddy Tresidda, and he told her what might have soothed any young thing less of a tigress than Milly was; but it made no mark on her.

"I'll let you into a secret," said Lawyer Pierce, "if you'll promise to keep it one. Mr. Tresidda is on to me about his new will, and if 'tis made as he means, then 'tis good-bye Silver Thimble for Teddy. But Tresidda hasn't got nobody but his son to leave his place to, and I'm putting him off with the law's delays so long as I dare, because I'm hopeful when your sweetheart's home, he'll go and see his father and work on him and save the situation. I don't say there's much chance of it, but we never know when human nature will surprise us, and every lawyer can tell you blood's thicker than water when it comes to the pinch."

A very kindly man, you see, with proper lawyer's instincts about the rights of property and so on; but Milly was past all that.

She went home and sulked; and then things happened. For 'tis a certain fact that if the Lord helps those who help themselves, the devil's quite as clever at it.

Very well I remember that great night, for it happened I left the "Hearty Welcome" just as Tresidda did. He'd told us he'd sent for the machine and was going to thresh his wheat next morning, but he could hardly get a man to pass the time of day with him now, and I shouldn't have walked by his side for a yard on purpose. However, my road lay all fours with his for a matter of three hundred yards, and he talked and said he was in a mind to sell Silver Thimble and get out of the country.

"People ain't buying farms, nowadays," I told him, "and 'tis very certain you'll have to whistle for the sort of price you'll ask."

Then, after a long silence, we came to a slate stile, where there was right of way over a field. The place stood high up above the cliffs. Tresidda went ahead and suddenly 'pon top of the stile he stood stock still staring afore him.

"What's that light?" he shouts out.

"The lighthouse on Trevose Head," I answered.

"Not there, you zany — there, down there!"

He pointed where Silver Thimble lay a mile below, and there, sure enough, was a dollop of steady red flame where no flame did ought to have been.

"You'd best trot along," I said. "That's terrible near your place by the look of it."

He was gone afore I'd done speaking, and being a fine night, with a steady, northerly breeze, I followed after — not for no regard for Tresidda; but fire's fire, and duty's duty, and I felt I couldn't well go home if man's work had to be done. I ain't so young as I was, however, and can't travel very fast at best of times, let alone on a rough road by starlight, so it was best part of a half-hour afore I got to the trouble. Long before I reached it I saw there was big mischief doing, for the flames rolled up sky-high, and you could hear the shout of 'em far ways off, like the noise of the sea through the night. Silver Thimble was rather a lonely house midway between Trebarwith Stand and St. Tid, and so Tresidda couldn't count on no help save that from his own men. The young chaps had gone to the war, of course, and there was only two oldish men left, for the lads he got to help by day went home to Trebarwith by night.

Well, 'twas the man's wheat sure enough, and I don't think the sea would have put out they stacks, for every one of them was alight to the heart long afore Tresidda got home; and though his chaps was working with buckets, they dared not get near enough for fear of getting their eyes scorched out of their heads. Five great stacks there were, and every one of 'em burning like a tar-barrel. 'Twas very clear it weren't no accident, for in that case one would have catched first, and it might have been possible to save three of the five very

likely; but they was all afire — every jack one of 'em — and the men as had gone to their beds swore the din of the fire had woke them from their sleep, and they hadn't been to work five minutes before their master came back. To save a grain of all that rare crop was impossible from the first; but Tresidda wouldn't see it, and he fought like a demon and drove his men to do the like.

For my part I turned my attention to the farmer himself, and when another man or two, drawn by the fire, came up presently, we did our best to keep Tresidda out of harm. But he shook us off, and cussed us for a lot of lazy rascals, and raved and rushed around like a cat on hot bricks wearing himself out with fruitless labour. At last he fell backwards over a pig's trough before a flap of fire that thrust out in his face, and just then the St. Tid fire-engine got down with a good few friends to do what they might. But there weren't much before them except to see the farm was safe, for the stacks were burnt out by now, and nothing but great, red-hot, panting heaps of ashes.

After the flames died I mind how terrible dark it seemed; but we lit up in the farm and carried in Tresidda, who'd gone fainty and was in a bad way by now. We got some brandy into the man, and one of the chaps that came with the engine mounted a hoss and galloped up over, hell for leather, to fetch doctor. And when he came an hour later he found that Tresidda had put out his thigh and strained his vitals into the bargain.

I'd gone home afore him, and next morning — Sunday it was — half St. Tid went down to see the night's work. Then we heard how Samuel Tresidda was in a

terrible poor way, and doctor didn't much like the looks of him.

O' Monday my wife saw a nurse, for two nurses he had from the first, and she heard as the master of Silver Thimble was a proper terrifying sight, with his hair half singed off and a burnt arm, and all sorts of trouble working inside him. He'd got wetted, too, messing about with the buckets, and what with his thigh and his rage, for he was like a fury along with his losses, and his great anxiety to know if the villains what done it had been catched, the man went from bad to worse, and in three days' time 'twas known as he had a double pneumonia — which by all accounts is a very deep-reaching and fatal thing.

He sent to Lawyer Pierce then, because the doctor told him it might finish him off; but Pierce — as had serpent and dove very nicely mixed in him — knew well why Tresidda wanted him. So he put off going, and warned the nurses in secret not to let the old chap write anything, nor sign anything, nor let anybody help him to do so.

'Twas straining law above a bit, I believe, and with a man at the mercy of his fellow-creatures like Tresidda was, I daresay you might call it cowardly; but you see when you know a sick person in sight of death wants to do a cruel and wicked wrong, there's a good argument against helping him. Anyway, the nurses wouldn't, no more would doctor, and when Tresidda sent for his farm men, neither of 'em would go; because everybody knew what his game was, and none meant to lend him a hand with it.

The rage of not being able to cut Teddy out of the farm didn't help the sick man to get better neither; and then, just when we heard up at St. Tid he was at his last gasp, and only hanging to life by an eyelid, there came the evening when Teddy Tresidda was home again. In fact, he got back from Southampton a day or two sooner than was intended when he heard of the trouble, and though Milly wanted him to come to her father's and go down to Silver Thimble next day, he wouldn't. He'd take no denial, but reckoned, come what might, it was his duty to go there and then to his home. They drove him down in the trap from the "Hearty Welcome," and he got there in the last of the dimpsy light, and breathed his native air off the Atlantic, and marked where five hundred pounds' worth of good corn had gone scat in the fire.

Then he went in to the sick chamber, and though he knew his father, his father didn't know him, for Samuel Tresidda was insensible and dead to the world.

He never came to no more, and at three o'clock next morning he went home, wherever that was; and St. Tid couldn't help saying and feeling 'twas a very good thing he'd been took; for if he'd got well again, he'd doubtless have had a properly fearful revenge on everybody for trying to stop him over the business of his will.

And then was another nice question for the law afterwards, because Milly Jago — shameless piece that she was — owned up to the fire. She'd done it, and it very near broke her parents' heart, I believe; but such is St. Tid that, barring the sorrow for good corn wasted, nobody worried the least bit, and it seemed that, except

Teddy himself, there was none to have her up and get her five years in gaol, which she'd very well earned. The police might have made a case 'twas thought, but the Inspector had had his troubles with Tresidda, like most people, and he said he didn't know nothing about Milly doing it, and declared that often people will claim the blame for a crime just because they're weak-minded. So he wasn't prepared to take her word for it!

And Milly said to Ted:

"There 'tis — and I killed your father instead of his killing me; and I've earned five years or maybe more — if not hanging, and you can send me to prison if you mind to, or have me strung up. And I shall love you just the same."

And he said:

"Well, us'll be married first, Milly, and then us'll settle about what's got to be done to you."

So there it was, and a month afore he went back to the war he wedded her. In fact, she's reigning down to Silver Thimble at this minute, and hoping to hear the war's in sight of the end, and Teddy soon coming home-along for good and all. But whether Teddy or his wife's babby will be the first to arrive at Silver Thimble, none can say for the minute.

He's going to set up a good piece of St. Tid slate to Samuel Tresidda, and he won't put no lies on it neither, but just the date of his father's birth and the date of his death, and no more. Nor was the dead man planted in the ground along with Jane, his wife. It didn't seem vitty somehow.

THE DREAM

They say you can judge of a man by the company he keeps, and no doubt 'tis a very good test; but I say you can judge of a man by his view of Providence, for no two people take quite the same view, and according as a man is humble or vain, wise or foolish, so he'll look at Providence. And some, of course, you'll find modest and religious, and all they should be when they name the subject; others will be doubtful, and they're the godless sort; and others, patronising, and they're the witless sort; and others again be always snapping and snarling at Providence, and always got a new grievance against it and never a good word for the thing. Then some fawn on it, like a dog on its master, and take everything Providence sends — good or bad — lying down as you say. And others just speak of Providence as they find it; and if all goes well, they are glad and say kind words about it, and if all goes wrong, then they keep quiet and wait for better times. But that sort don't pretend nothing, and if Providence treats 'em shameful, as it often will the very best, without a reason that eye of man can see, then they just bend to the blow; but they won't kiss the hand that smites 'em, and they won't go about saying it's all right, when they know it's all wrong. That sort don't help parson at the time of Harvest Thanksgiving, if there's no harvest; because to say thank you for nothing seems

a bit unmanly, in their opinion. Others again whisper the name as if it was all ears; and when they're having a bit of luck, or things be going extra vitty with them, they keep close as the grave about it and hate even their fellow-man should know, for fear Providence gets wind of their good fortune and swoops down upon 'em and upsets the applecart, as it so often will. Such people don't trust Providence a yard, and there's a great many like that; and, to be quite open and honest, I was one of 'em.

'Tis different now, of course, for by the time you'm up home seventy-five years there's no playing about with Providence no more, and you've got to trust it, for by that time there's little else left to a man he can trust; but in middle age, when I was going through my "fifties" or thereabout, I wasn't near so respectful to Providence as I be nowadays, and many a sharp and bitter thing I've said against it. God forgive me, I used to dress down Providence something shameful, for I had no patience with the creature; but 'twas all silliness and weakness of mind on my part, for, of course, Providence be like the Parish Council, or a Board of Directors — there's only just the name, and the thing haven't got no body to kick and no soul to lose. I used to call Providence an "iron devil" in hot summers, when the springs ran dry and the earth grew brick hard and the grey bird couldn't get a worm out of the ground for love or money; and then in winter time, when the farm was up to your knees in muck, I'd call Providence a "muddy old swine."

Looking back I can see I was a bit wilful like, though

no vice, you understand. But my farm was a bit too much for me, and the strain and anxiety got on my nerves and soured my temper sometimes.

If my first wife had lived, 'tis any odds I should have gone to the deuce; but she didn't, and my second, being a far different pattern of woman, made life at Tregulva more difficult, but a lot more healthy too. In fact, looking back, I can see the turning point was Jane Mary.

One of them women who hides her flavour like an apple, for who can tell what the finest fruit be like till he's bitten it? And who knows the gospel truth about a female till he's married her? And to say it not unkindly, Jane Mary's flavour at first was long ways short of her looks, and my heart sank after two years of married life to call home her family history; for she was a Tonkin, and they Tonkins of St. Tid be forged of steel, especially the women, and live to four score and ten full often. We made poor speed in double harness for a few years, and without a doubt she was a peculiar woman. Her charge against me was that I would keep bringing up my first wife and talking of her great success. I done it a-purpose to spur on Jane Mary, and any other female would have took shame to be beat by a woman in her grave; but my second didn't care, and all she ever felt about it was that I made a hole in my manners every time I named Julitta, which was my first. And she knew she was a lot better for me really than Julitta had ever been.

Jane Mary always said she weren't a fair-weather wife, and that was true. I will give her credit for

great bravery in time of trouble; indeed, such was her nature that she liked to be up against a few hard problems. A most contradictory woman, in fact, for when all was suent and proper, and I felt I could see my money six months ahead, and enjoy a bit of extra comfort here and there in consequence — just at those good times Jane Mary would be at her worst — dumpish and bored and snappy in company and a proper handful behind the scenes at Tregulva. But let things look threatening and the weather ugly, or a run of bad luck with the beasts come along — then, if you'll believe it, she would perk up and be a very present help in time of trouble, and a most sensible and self-contained human creature.

"How the mischief is it," I once axed her, "that when the farm runs on oiled wheels and everything's right, and prices up and joy and gladness in my heart and the fruits of the earth all coming along just right, you find yourself bored to death and without a bit of kick and sprawl in your nature; while, when all's wrong and no hope nowhere, and the union workhouse fairly in sight, you wake up and get going and have the time of your life till we've straightened out the coil and can breathe again?"

And Jane Mary said:

"That's where me and Julitta be different, I reckon. For when the luck's good and all running so smooth as wedding bells, I'm always feared of my life that 'tis too good to last, and I see trouble hiding behind every hedge and know the crash must come. But if all's lost and not a blink of hope nowhere, then I feel the end is

in sight, and a change of luck's due, and every day brings us nearer to it."

A very unreasoning sort of woman, you see, yet she was always right in a manner of speaking, and though we went through some fairly tight pinches together at Tregulva, yet we came out unharmed and turned many a hopeless dawn into a tidy evening. I got in time to feel like she felt, that life in reality be a bit of a sporting fixture, and that every morning when you open your eyes, you don't know whether you'll win or lose the race you've got to run afore another sundown.

And that brings me to the dream, which, needless to say, was no work of mine; for I never dreamed a dream in my life, and don't waste no time from sleep dreaming; whereas my second wife hardly sleeps through a night without seeing strange things and hearing strange voices. 'Twas just as much a part of her life as eating her breakfast, and the things she dreamed were mostly silliness, though often they'd come out true in the upshot. In fact, a bit of second sight went along with her dreams, as when she saw Nancy Bake come into chapel wearing a bonnet with a yellow poppy in it; and Nancy Bake, sure enough, did so the very next Sunday. And so, when, as sometimes happened, my second wife dreamed of the future, I always gave due weight to the fact. Not that it was any credit to her, being just a gift, like blue eyes or any other fine thing; yet it proved a useful accomplishment sometimes, and when she dreamed who stole my William pears one summer, I took her at her word and walloped the right boy — to his undying surprise. And then came that

black year in the nineties, and again she dreamed a bit of luck for me, and my soul hungered to believe her, though my sense rebelled against doing so.

A black year I call it, and so it was in a sort of way, for we had such a drought as never was known by living man in North Cornwall before or since. The very dew forgot how to fall, and the dryth struck down and down till the solid earth was baked so hard as a brick a foot under the grass, and the trees began to ripe their wood and fling down their leaves while yet it was July. As for our streams, they had fairly dried up to the springs, and the beastly east wind, that blew hot on your cheek week after week, brought all manner of plagues out of the pitiless blue sky. For every blight and mildew and canker that God ever loosed on a wicked world for its sins, came to St. Tid that year. The broad beans was black with fly, and the rust got in the corn, and the stoning fruit shrivelled on the bough and fell off after great promise. For the hope of May only cast us down all the more when the drought came, and one by one we lost the chickens we'd counted afore they were hatched. The hay went to glory, and the best was thin as an old man's hair and not worth the saving. And the roots only broke through to perish. The mangel and swede were alike in vain, and a time arrived when we knew that hope was dead for the roots and that Noah's deluge wouldn't save them.

Day after day of blistering sunshine we had till the country was brown as a dead leaf and the people as black as niggers, and great fear growing in men's minds for the corn. But I was at my last gasp long before

harvest, for I had more stock than usual that year — far more than I could afford to feed while the drought held — and, of course, nobody would buy the things for love or money; so I was reduced to a terrible low ebb, and uttered many rash words against Providence that I've felt ashamed of since. But to go from March to middle of July without enough rain to float a tadpole — 'twas enough to make any man of the soil say harsh things; and be sure I weren't the only one who shook his fist at the sun and doubted the sense of the sun's Maker.

Of course, through this awful catastrophe, my wife was at her very best and took a wonderful cheerful and Christian line of conduct. She'd got the faith that moves mountains, and the lighter grew my purse the brighter appeared to grow her hope and trust.

The great trouble to me was my stock, for I'd raised a rare lot of fine young bullocks that year, and when the trouble came and I found I couldn't feed the creatures, and cast about to sell 'em, not a bid could I get. In fact everybody was selling and none wanted to buy. 'Twas all we could do to water the things, let alone find grass for 'em.

And then, in my darkest hour you might say, when it looked as though I'd got to kill all my creatures to save 'em from dying a natural death, Jane Mary had her far-famed dream. So great was her trust in dreams and such-like fansical and dangerous things, that you couldn't help echoing it a bit, and though, as a reasonable man with my share of sense, I believe, and a bit over at the service of other people, yet there it was,

and so dead sure felt my wife that the dream was bound to come true, that she put a spark of her hopefulness into me. No doubt the wish was father to the thought, as they say; but be it as 'twill, when Jane Mary woke one red-hot July morn and told me I'd get my money for my cattle by the last day of the month, I made myself believe her. And once I fairly got to believe, I felt a good bit of comfort. 'Twas a great act of faith, no doubt, but in my judgment faith is well worth fighting for, and because a thing don't seem within the bounds of chance, there's no good reason for refusing to believe it may hap. And the harder a holy fact is to swallow, the greater the comfort if you can once get it down.

So I shared my wife's sure trust that I was going to get my money for the bullocks, and nobody was more surprised than her to find I could do so. She was a good bit flattered, in fact, and said it was quite a new thing for me to give Providence a free hand in such a ticklish matter.

"But you'll never regret it," she said, "and when it happens, I hope you'll pay quicker heed to me in future, not for my sake but your own. Once get into the way of believing me," she said, "and you'll never regret it."

So I put my bottom dollar on the bullocks, and kept 'em fed at bitter cost to my savings for a fortnight. Then the end of the month was in sight, but still none came forward to make Jane Mary's dream come true. What did happen, however, was the break-up of the drought, and, along with it, the most awful tempest

that any man in North Cornwall had ever seen. Not the oldest could call to mind such a proper trouble of the elements, and 'twill go down to history, no doubt, as a fair masterpiece of a thunderstorm.

The air was sickly from dawn onward, and it growed worse every minute. The sun rose like a bad florin, and there was a sort of scum of thin cloud, yellowish and sulphury, drawed over the blue sky by noon, and the very air grew so hot as the breath of an oven. Men sweated and the beasts ran about fearfully; then the horizon to the north grew dark as a wolf's mouth, and, coming up right against the sick, hot wind, there heaved up a proper terror of clouds. In fact it seemed as if night was rising from a strange quarter to swallow the day. The birds began to go to roost, and all living things, humans included, grew restless and perplexed. But at bottom the farmers were properly thankful and welcomed the storm; and each hoped the rain wouldn't miss his land.

The thunder grew from a growl far ways off to a harsh rumble, as it came nearer, and the lightning began to trickle down the clouds — proper ribbons of it. In fact, it looked as if it had come up out of the earth as well as dropped from the sky; and then a sound grew — a gentle, steady sound between the thunderclaps. Some might not have known what that sound was; but I knew and blessed it, for 'twas the cisterns of the sky breaking up and the rain falling in torrents and waterspouts ten miles off. It came quickly, however, and I was just going out into five acre meadow — a big level field behind Tregulva — when the sky properly opened.

Like a great, grey veil it came, and I'l swear the lightning ran over my hands like hot water when I ran out with Tom Keat, my head man. The sheep dogs wouldn't face it, and the pair of 'em fairly turned tail and howled. But we held on, because there was a great danger growing in the meadow, and my stock — five-and-twenty fine young bullocks and heifers — would be sure to do the wrong thing, as cattle always will in a thunderstorm, and make for the shelter of the trees. For sheep and cattle be terrible put about afore lightning and thunder. To rain they'll turn tail and take no count of it; but against lightning they'll always bolt for cover.

You couldn't see a hundred yards in front of you through that curtain of rain, and the storm was right overhead. Such was the rage of the elements that my voice wouldn't carry to Keat, and I lost him in the midst of the field. Then I got a bit dazed-like myself, and there came a flash of lightning that seemed to fall right alongside of me and a crash of thunder that properly burst my earholes. I went down all ends up, for the smash throwed me off my feet. I thought, of course, it was the end, and quite counted to open my eyes in kingdom come; but the Lord kept me for another time, and I got my senses back in half a minute, and found no harm had overtook me. But I'd had enough now, for I was drownded, and the electric fluid had got in my bones, and I felt five-acre meadow was no place for a Christian man just then. So home-along I went and shouted for the brandy; and I told Tom Keat's wife that she must prepare for the worst.

"I'm cruel afeared Tom's a goner," I said. "The lightning took me off my feet like a babe, and though it spared my life, 'tis any odds your husband weren't so fortunate. For 'twas a terrible far-reaching flash, and if he was in the midst of it, he must have gone to his reward, for certain."

Just as I spoke, however, and gulched a drop of spirits to steady my nerves, Tom came in sight, and we thanked God for His mercies. He'd been served pretty much like me, though no worse; but he was a very faithful man, and his one thought was for me; and when he found me saved, his one thought was for the cattle. In fact, he wanted to go out again and drive 'em into the open; but I wouldn't suffer it, for I knew the things would be mad with fright, and very likely turn on Tom if he got rounding 'em up at such a moment.

When the storm passed an hour later, and before it had time to come round again, we went out; but not until the lightning struck Tregulva. It came down the chimney of an upper chamber, where our maiden slept, but fortunately she was down house and so escaped. The lightning sent half the chimney into the yard and broke out the fire grate and mantelshelf and flung 'em on the girl's bed! Then it went out through the wall and didn't do no more damage to the dwelling. But that wasn't all its work, for when me and Keat got out a very fearful sight met our eyes under the elm. Not a bullock stood, and the dogs, who was feared no more, ran out and tried to make 'em get up. But 'twas fated they should never get up again, for every beast was dead, and the great elm, where the

silly things had run for aid, stood torn all down one side and the bark stripped away for twenty feet. I couldn't believe my eyes.

There lay my poor bullocks and heifers in a ring just dropped in their tracks by the pole-axe of the lightning, and I stood dazed afore my fearful loss, and so did Keat. For flesh struck to death in a thunderstorm is worthless. None can eat it, because it turns black and the dead beast swells so big as a mountain in no time.

We went home-along, and Keat took my arm, for I was terrible down-daunted and sick at heart, and not even the rare smell of the wet earth in my nostrils could rouse me. It looked as if this was the last straw to break my back and that I'd have to throw up the sponge and go bankrupt when quarter-day came round again.

But then came Jane Mary and heard the fatal news and took it as if I'd got a legacy.

"How wonderful be the hidden workings of the Lord," she said. "Every creature gone? Then that makes my dream come true!"

I stared at her and thought her wits were flown.

"Don't you see," she said. "You'll get your cash for your cattle now they're dead, though you couldn't while they was living. 'Tis true they'll be but small use to the owner, save for their skins and horns and hoofs; but they're yours no more; they're insured against death by lightning and you'll draw the insurance money next week, no doubt, when they've sent to see the fatal scene."

I do declare that, owing to the shock of the storm and the disaster of the thunderbolt, I'd forgot all about the insurance: but it came true just as my wife said, and for the poor stricken carcases I got their full value and was a made man for the time being.

"Providence has saved its bacon for once," I said to Jane Mary.

"'Twould be more civil to say that Providence has saved yours," she answered me.

And, of course, that was the right and proper way to look at it.

THE HOUSE IN TWO PARISHES

How one thing bears upon another is the greatest mystery about life in my opinion, and no doubt if we could see the network of cause and effect spun and spinning round us, it would be a very interesting and wonderful spectacle. But while helpful to us in some ways, it would cast us down in others; for all effort would cease and hope, too often, die, if we could rightly understand we are the creatures of circumstance, and must follow out the path marked for us by unseen forces working for our good, or evil. For did he know he was going to reach the goal of his hopes, a man would give up troubling about the journey; and so he would if he knew he wasn't going to reach it. In fact 'tis the uncertainty of life that is its salt, and if we had wits enough to understand how, given the warp and woof, a certain pattern must be wove, then we should know more than is given to us to know and so fail of duty.

"Red Larches" was our farm, and you wouldn't see much to note about it if you'd passsed that road on your way to St. Tid, because it's a commonplace sort of dwelling — two-storied with thick walls and a tar-pitched roof to keep out the rain and the west winds from the sea. We stand pretty high and most of our land slopes away to the cliffs; but south there's a

coomb, where a tree or two manages to raise its head and a stream winds down to join a river eastward. A good furze brake lies that way also, and is generally safe for a brace of rabbits if your dog knows his business.

But the queer thing about "Red Larches" is this: the farm-house lies in two parishes and half the house-place is in St. Tid and t'other half in Lanteagle. So it follows that the parlour and dairy and rooms up over belong to the one; while the rest of the house belongs to the other. Same with the land; but the bulk of our two hundred acres is St. Tid's and we only pay tithes to Lanteagle for a water meadow and ten acres of arable.

Well, of course, there's scores and scores of other dwelling-houses that must have their foundations in two parishes, or two counties for that matter; and I myself have stood before today with one foot in Devon and the other in Cornwall, but the very strange tale to be told hangs upon this peculiar accident and makes good my first remark, that the way things bear upon each other is the greatest mystery of life. It is not often given to us to see the mysteries working, I grant, and when once in a way we do so, then we learn much worth knowing from it and see how the Lord uses even such little accidents as a house in two parishes for His own good purpose.

When this thing happened there were three Nathaniel Jagos all at "Red Larches" together; namely, my grandfather, my father and myself. For "Nathaniel" was always the name of the eldest son in our family, and

so it came about that there was Mr. Jago Senior, or "Uncle Nathan," as everybody called him, and Mr. Jago, which meant my father, and just Nat, which meant me. As for father, he'd been an only child, but I had three brothers, two gone for sailors and one in the slate quarries at St. Tid. Grandmother was dead and my mother ran the farm and looked after us men. Nor was grandfather a bed-lier, or past work for all his eighty years. He'd do his share as peart as any old man; and best he loved to labour in haytime and harvest. To be on the machine mower and cut the hay was his particular delight.

He was a sunny old man to his dying day and always looked at the hopeful side, which is a rare gift in those who work on the land. But at twenty year old and earlier than that I had sense to mark the difference between him and father, and I determined on the quiet to grow up like grandfather and put a good face on things and not shout out before I was hit, and fancy everybody was an enemy, same as father did. They were both very Godfearing men; but with a difference, for father feared more than he trusted and grandfather trusted more than he feared. Father was close and grandfather was open; father never seemed to think other people was doing the fair thing by him; grandfather often wondered if he was doing the fair thing by other people.

The old man kept the reins too — not for lack of love for my father, but because he held to it that while a body had his wits and sense and energy he'd got no right to lay down his burden. So he was master, and

my father, who, despite all his temper and suspicious ways, loved grandfather and honoured him higher than all men, was very pleased to serve him, as he had served all his life, and didn't look forward at all to the day when he'd own "Red Larches." No more did I for that matter. Father himself was up home fifty-five and I was two-and-twenty when these things fell out.

Life was going along very steady when, owing to my father's cranky temper, an awkward and unpleasant event happened. Our head man, Aaron Chirgwin, decided to get married, and after being tokened to a maiden for three year, he set out into double harness. But he had no mind to leave grandfather and weren't going to. His wife was Jane Polwarn, from "Lower Ford," in Lanteagle parish — a very good dairymaid and a church-goer, like Aaron himself; and as my mother had long been crying out for a new dairymaid, it all suited very well.

Then began father's famous feud with the Reverend Mr. White, vicar of Lanteagle; for that gentleman, seeing that Jane Polwarn was one of his parishioners and had taught in his Sunday School, was very wishful that she should be married in his church, but my father, who had more than one breeze with the reverend gentleman over tithes, didn't wish it and was very anxious for the wedding to take place at St. Tid's.

"He's only after the fees," said father to Chirgwin. "He's one of them grasping men and grabs all he can put his hands on, and devours widows' houses, as we all know. As if that glebe to Lanteagle wasn't enough, and more than enough, for any man short of a miser."

This was true, I dare say, for there were plenty of stories to show the vicar of Lanteagle a keen customer where pounds, shillings and pence were concerned. And father declared the Reverend White had bested Jane Polwarn's master over a horse, only six months before her wedding was announced, and grandfather blamed him a good deal and said it was going too far and a most unchristian thing to say so.

At any rate Aaron felt quite willing to be married where my father pleased, for so long as it was in a place of worship in the Church of England, he didn't mind and was always wishful to please the family. He agreed to be wed at St. Tid, and then, a week later, he met the Reverend White and the gentleman talked him round and convinced him that he ought to be married at Lanteagle.

Aaron explained when he came back to "Red Larches," and said he didn't want no fuss with quality and so he'd better, perhaps, fall in with the vicar of Lanteagle and be married in Jane Polwarn's parish; but that didn't suit father at all. He told Aaron to his face he was a weak worm and not worthy of us, and he went further and ordered him to put up the banns at St. Tid the very next Sunday.

"You sleep in the west dormer attic anyway," said father, "and that's in St. Tid, so you've got nothing to do with Lanteagle. I make it a personal matter and Jane Polwarn's not such a fool as to stand out against me, I should hope."

He was very much annoyed and, as fate willed, he met Parson White two days later in the train going to

Launceston. And by all accounts father must have said some sharp things; for the reverend gentleman changed carriages at Camelford, and it was five years before he ever spoke to father again.

He came back from market triumphant, did father, and told grandfather what he'd said; and grandfather was a good bit vexed about it and thought father had done wrong.

"I let him have the ugly truth," said father. "There was none in the compartment but me and him, and I told the man he'd got a very bad character in North Cornwall and not worse than he deserved." "'You're a lot too sharp after the dibs for a man of God' — that's what I told him," said father. "'You use religion like a cloak,' I said, 'to hide your worldly mind and your grasping nature. And what's the result? You're driving the people to chapel and making the Church of England a laughing-stock. 'Tis a most ill-convenient thing I can tell you, and a good few of us thinking men are a lot put about over it. And you'll empty your church — that's what you'll do. And I don't speak without the book, because I know what you tried to do against us about my tithes and what you succeeded in doing about the hoss you sold to Jack Baskerville at "Lower Ford." And these things are recorded. And as to the girl that's going to marry my head-man, I'll have you to know that they wed in St. Tid's, where I worship — and why not?'"

So father had spoken and then Parson White, who was a younger man than father, had lost his temper, and threatened to have father up for libel and said

'twas a shame such a man should be running loose to backbite his neighbours.

"Do so," said father. "Have the law of me by all means. I'm ready and willing to testify to what I've said. And I tell you that you ill become your cloth. And Jane Polwarn and Aaron Chirgwin don't marry from your church, whether or no, because I've defied them to do so."

Then the train stopped at Camelford and the vicar of Lanteagle said not another word, but just looked at father and changed his carriage.

Of course father had gone much too far; he always did when he was excited. And grandfather blamed him sharply for letting his temper run away with him and strongly advised him to ride over to Lanteagle at the first opportunity and say he was sorry. But father scorned the thought. He'd been wanting to get his own back from the Reverend White for a long time; and now he considered they were quits.

We all went to the wedding, which was duly celebrated at St. Tid's, and a good rally of neighbours came to the feast at "Lower Ford" after, for the Baskervilles were very fond of Aaron's bride and sent her off as handsome as if she'd been their own daughter.

Father hoped that Parson White would do something about it and, in one of his excited moments, he went so far as to picture himself called up afore a judge to talk about his enemy; but even I knew it was all nonsense; because if Parson White was fond of the money, that weren't to make him out the rascal father declared him to be. For that matter father was a pretty close

bird himself, and he always said he had to be, because grandfather was so terrible open-handed.

There was chipping in letters every year over the tithes, and then parson and father met on a committee called together to decide how we should celebrate the coronation of his late Majesty, King Edward VII. And the Reverend White, being in the chair on that occasion, had his knife into father before some of the leaders in the district and made him look foolish and got a laugh at his expense. So that kept the famous feud going between 'em, and father, after the meeting, which turned down all his ideas how best to celebrate the coronation, said that them laughed longest who laughed last, and that he'd be even with the holy man yet. His only regret was we'd got a foot in Lanteagle, and if it had been possible, I'm sure he'd have uprooted "Red Larches," so as not a brick of the farm-house, or a rood of the land, should lie in that parish.

Then there fell a dark day when trouble broke in upon us like an armed man and we were faced with a cruel and sudden shock. 'Twas a thing that had surely to be by the laws of Nature, and yet it crushed us when it came, for there's many and many a grief we know lies ahead, and for which we are well enough prepared, and yet, when it happens, our human nature ain't proof against suffering and it turns the heart to water.

Grandfather had been doing the work his soul delighted in all day, and that was sitting on the mowing machine and driving the pair of horses that drew it. He enjoyed that task and would be up with the larks when there was mowing to be done. The first to start

and the last to knock off when the day ended was he at such times. He often vexed father, because he would put in such a long spell at hay harvest; but it didn't seem to hurt him, and as each year came round grandfather would say the same thing.

"'The night cometh,'" he'd say, "and then no man may work, so as this may very likely be my last year among you, I must do my bestest, souls, as usual."

And so the game old boy would toil on until he was so weary that we pretty near had to help him off his seat on the mower.

The third day of hay cutting it was, and he seemed much as usual till after supper; then he said he felt as perhaps he'd overdone it a bit and had better get to bed. And father burst out at him and said that it was no better than shortening his life and might very likely end in suicide if he persisted. But grandfather only laughed and went to his rest; and my mother looked in at him the last thing and put a little eggy pudden by his side, which he was in the habit of having; for he always ate very light and slept very light; and sometimes a mouthful in the small hours would stay his stomach and help him to slumber again.

Mother came down in two minutes and said he was sleeping very comfortable, so we troubled no more about him and went to our beds as usual.

Not a sound did we hear in the night neither; but when day came and my mother, according to her custom, took the old bird an early cup of tea at half after five o'clock, she gave a loud cry, and father and me, at breakfast below, dropped our food and rushed up over

the stairs so fast as we could run. And there was grandfather on his back, calm and smiling and looking twenty years younger than when he went to bed. Cold as a quilkin [1] was he, and though I'd never seen death before, I knew at a glance the dear old man must be a goner. Mother wept bitter tears over him and so did I, for it seemed as though the world couldn't go on without grandfather; but my father for once kept his head better than any of us, and he told mother to make all seemly and he bade me get on a horse and ride off to Lanteagle for the doctor and call and tell Mrs. Bakewell, the nurse, to come and help mother lay grandfather out. So, glad of something to occupy my mind, I went and rode off at a gallop, though well I knew fifty doctors couldn't bring back the life to grandfather.

And when, an hour or two later, the doctor came, he said 'twas a very good death for the old man, though a curious one. And indeed sudden death is only terrible for them that be left behind, and no doubt that's why the living pray against it. The doctor said that in all likelihood 'twas heart failure from so much over-exertion the day before; and I think father was glad in a way that was the cause, for he'd told grandfather time and again not to work so hard. So he had nought on his conscience. Doctor looked the old man over and thought there were queer points about it and reckoned we might have to call an inquest. He was busy just then, but said he'd call in again.

Of course we was all over the place that day and forgot about the hay and everything; and from being

[1] *Quilkin.* Frog.

pretty sensible, father grew more and more flustered as the time wore on, and 'twas all mother could do to keep him calm. For anything like a surprise always threw father out of his gait, and now, what with the lawyer and the undertaker, and all the needful writing to call relations to the funeral and break the black news to 'em, let alone the hay crying out to be made, my poor father lost his self-control something shocking. And when mother chid him and told him to face his duty in a more manful spirit and not run about wringing his hands like a girl, he let loose his anger on her, and said some crooked words, and made me so savage that for two pins I'd have said undutiful things to the man and, no doubt, repented of 'em ever after.

When she'd took a cup of tea to steady her nerves, mother went in the garden to calm herself and pick some flowers for the death chamber; and father was just saying that we ought to put a bit of crape on the bee-butts, because 'tis very unlucky and leads to great trouble if you don't tell the bees of a death, when that happened you might say was worse than anything that had gone before.

For, looking out of the window, what should I see walking up the flower garden but the form of the Reverend White!

"Good Lord, father!" I said, "if here ain't parson from Lanteagle coming to call upon you."

And father, who read far deeper into that than I did, very near choked over a mug of tea he was drinking at the time and started to his feet in a proper frenzy of excitement.

"That's the limit of endurance!" he said. "A very little more and I shall lose my reason. And, as it is, I envy the dead, for they be out of the fret and torment of their fellow creatures."

"He's only coming to offer the comfort of his holy calling, you may be sure," I told father. "'Tis the man's business to visit the house of the dead and say words that will calm you down and dry mother's tears."

But father took a much darker view than that.

"Not him!" he said. "That's not why he's here. He wants to see where father breathed his last, and he be come to have a look at the blessed dead for his own dark ends and wicked reasons. I know him — the rogue!"

The vicar of Lanteagle was at the door by now and he'd already given a gentle knock; but father forbade the maiden to answer.

"I won't let him in," he said. "God's my judge, but he shan't enter this house nor see my father's dust."

"Why for not?" I asked. "He can't do no harm to poor grandfather. He never had no quarrel with him; and grandfather would like to think a holy man had put up a prayer over his clay. You may be sure of that."

"Stuff!" said father. "You speak like a ninny-hammer and don't know nothing of the world. He's come to see whether the old man died in his parish, or St. Tid's, and when he knows that it was in Lanteagle his bedchamber stands, he'll grab him for his graveyard and get the fees."

Well, somehow, I never thought upon such a thing as that. Besides, us Jagos had all been laid in the burying-ground at Lanteagle for years and years, and my grandmother was there, and a row of the family dating back to the first George. So I said,

"Surely he'll be teeled [1] along with grandmother?"

Then parson knocked again, a bit louder, and I felt positive from the first that he'd merely come to say the word in season and had no thought of burial fees nor nothing like that; but father was working himself up into a proper flame, and I used my wits and made a suggestion.

"If you think so," I said, "us had better to circumvent the holy man while there's time. And so you'd best tell Jenifer to let him in the parlour and keep him there for five minutes; and meanwhile you and me can carry poor old grandfather across and put him in my bedroom, which be in St. Tid parish. Then the reverend gentleman's done; because if grandfather lies in St. Tid's, he dursn't lay hands upon him."

We found out afterwards that it was all nonsense on my father's part and that nobody had no power over the corpse, no matter where he'd died; but at the time, properly flummoxed as he was, father catched at the idea, and we went upstairs and Jenifer let the parson in.

And me and father set about to carry our dead across from Lanteagle into St. Tid.

Full twenty yards we had to take him, by some winding passages with a step or two, and at one step, which

[1] *Teeled.* Buried.

father forgot, he tripped and fell to his knees and gave the blessed dead a proper shaking. In fact, if father hadn't let go of the old man's feet, he'd have broke his own neck. And I dare say, feeling as he was, he wouldn't have been sorry if he had. But he saved himself and used the awfulest language and then picked up the feet of the poor old man. And so we carried him to my chamber. Then we put him in my bed and composed him, and covered his old eyes again with two penny pieces, for him though they were, they was open and had a haunting touch of life about 'em still; and I knew I should creep to my last day when I thought upon them. In the excitement I hadn't time to spare a moment to the future; but, as I went down house again and calmed father before he marched in to see the enemy, I couldn't help but feel that my sleeping room would be haunted for evermore by the spectrum of poor grandfather.

Now we were in the room just over that in which Parson White waited for my father to see him, and the deed done, father grew a bit easier, and was so self-possessed as to ask Jenifer for a brush and smoothed down his hair before he went into the parlour.

And at the same moment my mother returned from the garden with a very fine nosegay of stocks and monthly roses to put on the old man's breast.

Parson began on 'em instantly.

"In his sleep, last night, I hear that our dear old friend passed away," he said. "A beautiful end for one so well prepared."

"So it was then," answered my mother. "And if

you wish to look upon him, sir, you'll see a corpse that shows death have got no sting."

"I should like to do so — and kneel beside him," said parson. "The presence of death should always bring its solemn message to the living, my friends, and I can honestly say I have won many a valuable lesson from the death chamber of even a little child."

Well, what could have been nicer than that? For my part I'm sure the reverend gentleman meant nothing but good to us and spoke with no mean thought of gain; and I'm certain sure he didn't care a button whether grandfather had died in Lanteagle or St. Tid. Mother was of the same opinion, as she said after; but father read all manner of devilry into the speech, and when he said he'd like to see grandfather, of course my poor father was certain sure he wanted to mark the corpse down in Lanteagle and claim it for his burying-ground.

"He died in St. Tid, I must tell you," says father, scowling at mother to keep her mouth shut. "He lies in the chamber over this room, and that's St. Tid. Yes, his usual room was the other side of ope-way, I grant; but he'd changed it, you see."

Parson White weren't troubled by this whopper from father, and I don't suppose he knew or cared where our old man was in the habit of sleeping. Mother stared and very near let fall her nosegay, and then that happened far more wonderful yet, for just as father was starting through the open door and parson after him, what should we hear above us but a voice!

A thin, weak voice sure enough; but my grandfather's for a million; and he said:

"Guy Fawkes and angels, where be I got to?"

Mother went down lumpus in a faint, and I set about her, and knowing the thing to do was to burn a feather under the nose of a fainting creature, took a feather from the mantelshelf, where they stand for us to clean out pipes with, and lit up under mother's nose; and father rushed up over-stairs with his hair on end and the Reverend White followed after.

Such an upstore there never was on land or sea, I reckon, and when mother come to, I let her be and went to the kitchen for the brandy bottle and galloped aloft to find grandfather sitting up in father's arms dazed like, but alive as need be. 'Twas clear he'd falled in a catalepsy, and but for the shake up we gave the dear old man trundling him into my sleep room, he'd surely have gone to his coffin and his grave in that state, and none any the wiser but him and his Maker till the Day of Judgment!

Of course we couldn't conceal from grandfather the terrible disaster that had overtook him; but when he heard all about it, he felt it might have been such a lot worse, and, like the wise old chap he was, he didn't take on overmuch. And such was his love of a joke, that when parson had gone, after congratulating us all very properly on getting our old hero back out of the jaws of the grave, and hoping that grandfather wouldn't forget to return thanks for his great escape, weak though he was, the sick man laughed like anything when

he heard the steps that father and me had took so as he should sleep his last sleep at St. Tid.

And he gave father a facer, too, for he said it was a very clever thought of Providence to bring him back to life again in that case, because he'd always fully wished and intended to be buried along with grandmother at Lanteagle.

" 'Twas a most rash and unruly thought, Nathaniel," he said to father, " and without a doubt you do take a lot too much upon yourself, boy. And you let your notorious feelings against that good man run away with you. But it's quite clear the Lord used you to save me from a dreadful doom, and I hope, if anything of the sort overtakes me again, you'll all be properly careful not to put me underground until the seal of death be wrote visible upon me."

We promised that faithful enough, you may be sure; but when doctor came in towards evening and shook the old man by the hand, and said 'twas the best thing that had happened to him that day, he told us all that we need have felt no fear of any fearful mistake of that sort.

" I wasn't none too happy about him this morning," said doctor, " for there were queer symptoms I couldn't understand at the time, and I certainly wouldn't have let you put Mr. Jago away till I had satisfied myself the life was out of him never to return. 'Tis an uncommon state, no doubt," he said; " but such things do happen, and 'tis a doctor's place always to have his eyes open for fear of accidents."

He said that without doubt the shock of falling had brought the suspended life back again; and then he told us that we must look after grandfather properly careful and bade the old man stop in his bed for a good few days till he'd fetched up his strength again. And he dared him to go on the mowing-machine any more.

And as for father and mother and me, we praised God, and carried grandfather back to his own room. And we didn't drop him that time neither.

Father and mother sat up with him every night for a week, and by then, to use his own words, he was like a giant refreshed with wine, and crying to be up and about.

He didn't die in earnest for two years after that, and then, up to his old games, he went out on a bitter cold evening to look at some pigs; and the frost worked down into his breathing parts and he was gathered, like a flower of the field, in forty-eight hours.

But he lies to Lanteagle along with the rest of us that have gone before; and a thing to note is that my father, from the day of the famous catalepsy, changed his mind about the Reverend White, so that, without being friends exactly, no man can say they are enemies any longer.

And that's what I mean when I tell you the greatest mystery in human life, so far as I can see, is the way in which different things bear upon one another, and the strange accidents that God Almighty will sometimes employ to work out His amazing plans.

THE REED ROND

I

By the little reed rond under the wood there grew old, pollarded willows; and now, at mid-March, these massy stumps were like giants' heads on which bristled golden and horrent hair full three feet long.

An old woman regarded them and measured the value of the twigs. Already her grandson was reaping in the withy beds, close at hand. Beside the ancient stood a girl, and one had marked that contrast of centripetal and centrifugal in the expressions of age and youth. For the gammer was stricken, and life had drawn her features together, even as rheumatism and other ills had contracted her limbs, thrust one shoulder higher than the other and dragged her withered fingers into the palms of her hands. Brown, gnarled, weathered and time-foundered was she, and dim were her brown eyes. They, too, had grown centripetal, and were veiled behind the curtain of the past; they saw both less and more than the frank grey orbs of the girl. The younger face was inquiring, expectant, hungry for new experiences, full of life and the joy of it. Her shoulders were open, her bosom challenging, her body ready for action. The old had nothing to give away. She hugged her lean carcase, nursed each footfall and went gingerly to cheat pain; the young strode light of

limb and lithe of step, with pain as yet a stranger, with hope for her dower and love's immeasurable vista for her kingdom.

Charity Bickford had stood up to life, against long odds of ill-fortune and grief for seventy-five years. Her romance reads raw thrust into a few sentences, stripped from the full book of her days and abbreviated. Art is challenged to round it, draw the seemly veil, lower the light somewhat and suffer the red work to be done out of sight. There was so much red work. She had moved through a drama of heredity and known death better than she had known many of her human acquaintance; for it was her own who had died: the human weaklings born of her body to an unhealthy mate. Her children had risen fair and promised well; then, smitten from within and without, they had sunk and gasped away their broken lives. Some died upon her bosom; one passed away far from her.

When Charity was nineteen she fell in love with Edward Bickford, the owner of a little osier farm and reed bed hid in the lap of Cornish hills. But she knew not that it was death that made her man's eyes so bright and his cheeks so red; she remembered not that Bickford had one brother in a hospital and a sister in the grave.

Six children were born to them, and one died in infancy; then the father reached his tether, coughed for six months and bled to death on a winter night in Charity's arms. She was thirty-eight now and might swiftly have wedded again and escaped the swamp that was her home. But there were her children — three

boys, two girls. No sane man, for all her sense and charm, desired to burden himself with the sickly family of another's getting. The eldest son, Tom, a lad of eighteen, was her right hand and fought to keep the roof of the cottage over them and food in their mouths. But arundo straw was ceasing to find a market and the prosperity of the farm, never great, began to wane.

Children of a phthisical father could hardly have been born into a worse environment. They needed abundant food and here was poverty; they required healthy air of the uplands and the sweet freshness of the hills; but here the summer bred miasma and foul humours of stagnant water; the winter was dank and the atmosphere both humid and chill. Tom Bickford showed the storm signal first, though for a time the vitality of youth made nought of nightly coughs and sweats. He held on till he was two-and-twenty. Then he died as his father had died — with his head on Charity's bosom. The second son was threatened and went to sea; but he took death with him and was caried ashore at Sydney on his second voyage. They sent home his kit and a locket of gun-metal with the face of an unknown girl in it. Then the third boy, of stouter build and much like his mother, worked for her, and in his hidden heart called himself master of the osier farm and counted to live for ever. He had neither ache nor pain and was cast in a mightier mould than his brothers. And he was cleverer. He took warning, went heedfully, changed his clothes when he came in wet from the withy beds and permitted the threat of evil to make him selfish. Charity ministered to him day and night.

Her ignorance was extreme; therefore she coddled him, kept him too warm, denied fresh air entrance to their little home by the reed rond.

Of her daughters, Sally, the elder, married at seventeen, and went to live in South Devon. Her husband worked on the Teign in the clay barges, and she only exchanged one low-lying cot for another. When the river was out, mud, starred with wild asters and salicornia, spread almost from her cottage door for miles down the estuary; when it was up, the grey gulls floated there; and the hump-backed heron stood knee deep so close that Sally Tutt could see his eyes. Here she bore two children, a boy and a girl, before the curse strangled her also. Charity was with her when she died, and she and Jacob Tutt, the breaved bargeman, quarrelled as to whether the dead should lie with Charity's husband and son, or beside Jacob's mother. The man would not yield and his wife was buried where he willed.

"Leave room," said Charity, pointing to the little ones. "Look at their eyes — and their skin, like egg-shell china. 'Tis there! Leave room by her."

The father cursed Charity for a witch of ill omen, and indeed she proved mistaken. Her granddaughter and grandson lived and survived her.

Her other daughter, Grace, was eighteen at the time of Sally Tutt's death, and her sister's end preyed upon a feeble spirit, haunted her and shortened her life. The folk vowed that Grace might have escaped, had she not frightened herself into consumption. She lingered long and died in her sleep at last, worn to a shadow, like a

poplar leaf that falls in autumn, and whose transparent ghost the wind blows out of some cranny when spring has come again.

There remained selfish Alfred, and the reed rond did him no hurt. His health was good and his mind serene. His mother's own life was concentrated here and every sense fastened tigerishly upon him. She did not like him out of her sight. She got on his nerves, as he confessed to friends, and men called him "mother's boy" at the public-house. If he was late, her anxious, brown face peeped into the bar; on Sundays she brought him to church, on Saturdays she accompanied him to market. She stuffed him and went hungry; clad him and went cold to keep his great limbs warm. He kicked at last for shame, after finding her primitive, maternal instinct proof against all argument and all reason. She could not let him alone; therefore he sought a wife, to rescue him from his mother, and became betrothed to a gamekeeper's daughter, who lived in the woods nigh at hand. The gamekeeper little liked this match, for he was a prosperous man compared with Alfred and his osier bog.

"Bickford's only customers nowadays be a handful of damned gypsies, who buy half the withy wands and steal t'other half," said the gamekeeper to his girl. "Why do 'e want to marry a pauper — and hag-ridden at that, for his mother won't let the man out of her sight, wife or no wife?"

"I love him," answered she. "And we're tokened, and the old woman will very soon pack her sticks and clear once I reign over him."

But the marriage did not take place. The death this hale and hearty man had defied at one gate of the fortress, found entrance by another, beyond his power to bar. He met with an accident and badly bruised his back by falling off a slippery board on to a stump in the reed rond. He laughed at first; but in a few months it was broken to Charity that tuberculosis of the spine had overtaken her son. His engagement was broken off, and the mother he had tried to escape retained her power over him, for he was a cripple henceforth. Sometimes he flattered hope, rose from his bed and appeared stronger. But presently he died.

Charity was light-headed for a year and had to be put into an asylum. She used to cry out over the wall of the recreation ground, and passers-by would hear a pleasant voice calling to them, "Look at me — me that's bred food for six graves — six graves I've filled!"

Then gazing up they would see a fine, brown woman of five and fifty beaming and nodding to them.

She recovered and returned to the osiers. A man worked for her who had worked for her husband and her sons. He was called Philip Masterman and understood the reeds and withies. But the arundo proved not worth cutting and stacking nowadays, for none wanted it and thatching ceased to be practised in that district.

Next there came a ray of brightness and something to love again, for the bargeman, Jacob Tutt, was married once more, and having two other children and a masterful wife, desired to be free of the son by his first.

Mrs. Bickford welcomed the boy, fanned dead fires and found a little bleak sunshine in the joy of ministering to him. When he had done with school, he set to work at the osiers, learned all there was to learn and exulted in secret, as his dead uncle before him, that the marsh and willows and reed bed, where the coots and moorhens nested, would presently be his own.

The place was Charity's, and she strove year after year to be rid of it; but no purchaser could be found, because it was almost worthless as it stood and to drain it had proved too costly. Therefore she stopped on, since the workhouse was her only alternative.

Young Jacob Tutt grew and prospered. Then there woke within him love, and he won Melinda Deane, a pedlar's daughter from St. Tid — she who now walked beside Charity, gave her an arm over a bridge in the osier beds and came presently beside her to the old woman's cottage.

The dwelling-house stood lifted a little higher than the marshes, with a cabbage patch of half an acre behind it and the fens in front. Beyond the cabbages there spread great woods, and the foxes harboured within, where a quarry opened, so that Charity's poultry was snugly caged by night.

"Jacob's down in the reeds to work, I reckon. But he knows you be coming, so he'll be punctual," said Mrs. Bickford.

Her voice was mellow and pleasant still.

"Did you fetch the charm for my face from your father, Melindy?"

"So I did, mother," answered the girl. "He says

there be nine sorts of erysapalis but the same charm will cure 'em all."

"A proper herb-doctor he is."

"He does his share; but the patients have got to do their share too, and father says there's not a herb of the field be proof against want of faith. If you don't believe in 'em, they be powerless to pleasure you, or touch the ill. 'Faith have got to go along with physic' — that's what father says."

"He's a very clever man, and I believe in him," declared Charity. "He knows the vartues in many a weed we tread under our feet."

"But this is different. 'Tis a very old charm and plenty don't believe in it, though father says it never fails when you come to it trusting."

Melinda considered and frowned, a process that helped her wits.

"I've got it! 'Tis like this, mother, and all the things are easily to be had. You must take milk from a red cow and a fleck of wool from a black sheep — from under his left ear the wool must come. Then you dab the wool in the milk, and dress your erysapalis with it, and say a prayer. Here's the words. Father wrote 'em for you. 'Twas a moorman he got the charm from, and you mustn't give him nothing but thanks for it, else it won't work."

Charity, whose brown face was smeared with a red patch of erysipelas, took the paper thankfully.

"God knows if there's one thing life haven't filched away from me, Melindy, 'tis faith," she said. "I've had the faith to move mountains, and please God if 'tis

ever allowed me, in another world than this, to compare my life with that tortured man, Job, He'll find that there wasn't overmuch to choose between me and him. Ess fay! my case was worse than his, for what the Lord took from Job, He gave again while yet the man was in the flesh. But that can't hap to me, because I'm old, and miracles aren't worked in our time. The general public haven't got the faith for 'em. No, I shall see my family again, as sure as I see you this minute; but the tender joys of the body will be over and done with, worse luck. For I won't pretend I ban't sorry. There may be comforts that go along with being a shining spirit; but I shan't hug my boys and girls in my arms, and feel the flesh of them firm and healthy, and press my lips to their cheeks. I shan't do nothing like that. I shall never even be able to see 'em eat. For us shall all be spirits together."

Melinda was puzzled by these reflections.

"Lord, mother!" she said, "what a terrible queer way to look at it!"

"It may be my dear, but you can't look at it no other way," answered Charity. "Spirits be spirits, and no doubt they gain more than they lose, poor creatures, and be helped to forget the fine blessings of flesh and bones, as well as the horrors of 'em."

Then came Jacob Tutt, a hearty young man, brawny and well put together. He was blue-eyed, curly-headed, full-lipped, and he looked far less than his five-and-twenty years.

"I've catched a proper fish!" he said, and showed them a great dace of half a pound weight.

Charity clapped her old hands.

"Well done, Jacob! Now we shall have a brave dinner for Melindy."

He handed the fish to his grandmother, and she, telling them that the meal would be ready in half an hour, went within to prepare it. But Jacob and his sweetheart dawdled by the water. They sat down on a withy bundle presently, and he put his arm round her and rubbed his face against hers. She fondled his hand and picked the silver scales of the dace off it. Then she kissed it. They were both amorous, and presently he rose, yawned, stretched his arms over his head, and looked down at her with a mouth that watered.

"'Tis wisht work waiting for 'e," he said; "but so far as I can see, it's got to be, till granny drops. And tough as leather she is — good for ten year unless we have a bit of luck."

"Why must you wait for her?"

"Because it is just all we can do to keep food in our mouths and clothes on our backs and scrape up fifteen bob a week for Phil Masterman. I've looked round on the quiet to see if I could find a man as would do his work for less; but I can't."

"Offer him a thought less. He's only got his wife, and his cottage be rent free."

"Granny won't offer him less — for two pins she'd give him more. She's a bit tootlish over money — always was. Them at the end of their tether can't feel for the like of us."

"I wish to Christ I'd got a bit of money," said Melinda; "but you know how 'tis with us."

"Sometimes I think I will up and away."

"You can't leave her."

"I could leave her all right; but the withy beds are just worth waiting for, and it's all I shall ever get in the world. There'll be nothing out of father."

"Then we must wait. Of course she don't guess she's standing in the way."

"Not her."

"'Tis certain we can't tell her, so fond of you as she is."

"She's got no sense — all knocked out of her by trouble I reckon. She's on to me to marry again and again, and it often takes me all my time not to slap out the reason."

"Have she got anything put by?"

"Yes — for her funeral. So she says, but I reckon there's a tidy little bit been goodying for twenty year. She's close and never talks about it. Her grave's bought years and years ago, alongside her other graves. Her little lot all dropped pretty young, and none had no children but my mother."

Melinda reflected, but saw no light.

"I'm that useless," she said. "If I'd gone in service, I might have saved a few pounds, but father won't let me leave him till I marry."

"Did he send that charm for the old woman?"

"I've gived it to her."

"I wouldn't wish her dead," said Jacob, "for she's all right, and I reckon she's having the time of her life, poor old baggage. She wearies me with tales of her husband and children, and can remember to a pang how

each of 'em died, and to a whisper the last word each of 'em said. She maunders over it by the hour. Yet they'll slip her memory for ten minutes at a time, and I can even make her laugh off and on. And for the moment you'm laughing, you'm happy. So I wouldn't wish her dead, Melindy, though 'twill be a red-letter day — a proper revel for me and you when it happens."

"I wish there was another way than her going," said the girl. "'Tis like four carrion crows I seed a bit ago. They was waiting for an old hoss to die in a field, and walking round and round him to have the first dig at his eyes."

Charity's voice quavered out from the house door and they went in.

They ate the great dace and some bacon and potatoes, some bread and cheese, and a tapioca pudding. It was a meal unusually ample. The women drank tea and Jacob drank water. Then Melinda helped Mrs. Bickford to wash up, and the man lighted his pipe and returned to work.

In the evening, over a meal of bread and pork dripping, Charity, grown cheerful, pleaded with them to wed.

"'Tis the last wish of my life to see a great grandchild in my lap," she said. "'Tisn't as if you couldn't do with me in the house, Melindy, for well you know we understand each other cruel close, and we've unfolded our feelings, so we should never have no difference. You'd be missis, and I'd sit in the chimney-corner and ——"

Her grandson cut her short.

"That won't do, my old dear," he said. "You ban't the lazy, bed-lying sort. You'll hop about, so spry as a frog and busy as a mouse, for ten year yet, for all your rheumatics. And three into two won't go, so all's said. It can't be."

Melinda listened for the answer with her mouth open. If Mrs. Bickford really desired her to wed Jacob and share this home, and if, as her lover suspected, she had money saved, now surely was the time to hint at it. But her grandson's blunt summary of the situation seemed to strike Charity into silence. Her smiles perished, her animation departed, her customary centripetal attitude overtook her, and she shrank. She was like a snail, who, while making unexampled progress, is suddenly touched upon the horns. A strange expression crossed her face, which showed that she perfectly understood Jacob. Then she grew listless, stretched out her hand for a piece of watercress from the table, bent her head over it, chewed it and mumbled something to herself which they could not hear.

Jacob, rather alarmed at his own plain speaking, strove to cheer her! but she would not be cheered, and presently the young man and maiden left her. The girl kissed Charity on both cheeks and thanked her for a happy day; but the old woman only nodded and said she had been welcome.

"You touched her up," said Melinda to her lover presently, as he saw her home.

"I hardly thought that she was so quick-witted," he answered. "The old bird saw what I meant all

right, and I'm not sorry now I said it, because 'twill keep her from always twittering about us getting married. If she wants to see a great grandchild, she must pay for the fun and dip in her money-bag and give me another half-crown a week — then we can go ahead."

"'Tis only your notion that she's got a money-bag, however?"

"I grant that. She may have nought."

Next day Charity was still in a sombre mood and Jacob strove hard to cheer her. He procured milk from a red cow and a lock of wool from under a black sheep's left ear wherewith to apply it.

Her interest in the charm, however, waned, and she only attempted the application on two occasions.

"Let it bide," she said, when Jacob begged her to give the cure a chance. "'Tis no use now — my faith have gone weak."

II

An unfamiliar melancholy stole over Charity Bickford from the day in spring when Jacob caught the big dace and Melinda came to dinner.

The lovers could not fail to mark it, and the girl feared that the old woman must have taken her grandson's jest to heart; but this he refused to believe.

"If I thought that, I'd be so down in the mouth as her," he said. "No, 'tis only old age and aches and sleepless nights. She's a poor, old go-by-the-ground now; but she won't drop none the quicker for my fun.

Come summer she'll buck up. And even if I hurt her, she'll soon forget it. Her memory's like a sieve these days."

But Charity did not find the summer bring anodyne. The reply to her pleading that Jacob should take Melinda had fallen with crushing weight and left a bruise. It was the more painful because spoken in jest, the more pregnant because Jacob never dreamed of attaching any significance to it. He did not wish her away; she clung to that conviction; but he made it clear that until she was away no wife would come to his arms. The hope of a great grandchild went out and left her spirit dark. It had been a rare ambition and served to brighten her days and dreams.

She reluctantly abandoned the thought of Melinda at the osier farm. On reflection she perceived how impossible it must be, for the pedlar could give his daughter no dowry and Charity's own savings, concerning which Jacob had speculated, did not exist. Ten pounds was locked up in her desk for her burial, and that was all she owned.

They lived from hand to mouth. She had done so all her life and knew no security; the chronic state of the poor. Only today are they awakening to the unreason and impropriety of that state, only today do they demand to rise above the level of the bird, the fish, and all wild creatures that depend on health for existence. She brooded and walked by the summer waters and moved through the margins of the wood. She would pick up sticks there, and creep about among the trees until she had collected a burden.

But her heart grew heavier and the visits of Melinda woke no happiness in her eyes as of yore. She was no longer glad to kiss her and touch her young lips with her old ones. Physically Mrs. Bickford herself grew stronger as the summer advanced; her rheumatism relented, the erysipelas quite disappeared. In some moods she regretted this increase of health, for it made her thoughts more difficult. There was growing an ugly phantom beside her, and it would not depart. It fretted her nerves, angered her and tortured her. For it was cruel and unjust. What had she done through all her suffering years to be troubled thus? What crime had she committed to find this hideous shadow of the mind growing daily, gripping at her moral sense and sapping her faith like a spiritual cancer? She defied it and fell back upon religion; but that failed her, for although a woman of great faith, as she truly declared to Melinda, the staple of her beliefs was not knit very closely into any controlling creed.

She had often criticized Heaven in her heart and had come to the conclusion that, for her, the hereafter must indeed be gorgeous if common justice were to be done.

She marvelled now, when the shadow beckoned, that there should be any reluctance and annoyance on her part to follow it. Death had been regarded by her as a release for so long that the idea had dwindled to a commonplace. Yet, now that she examined it, in the light of this agitation, she found despite her age, her infirmities, her slight hold on life, that death had changed his aspect and offered no immediate attraction. When her death mattered to none, she longed for it;

now that it did matter to this boy and girl, she resented any serious consideration of it. That her life should possess a sort of consequence for the living had astonished her a great deal, for she had long felt that it was useless, save for the temporary convenience of her grandson; but now her eyes were opened and she perceived that even this poor fag end of days, not wholly unhappy, with old, wild griefs softened to a memory, might be enjoyed in ease no more. She had sunk to a state of contentment — Heaven drawing daily nearer and the great meeting drifting gently closer — and she loved to picture that meeting and imagine the order of her precious spirits as they advanced on the threshold to hail her — husband, daughters and sons. But the waiting time had come to be actually pleasant. The interest awakened by Jacob was keen and the hope great, that this last scion of her own blood, having escaped the curse, would build on sure foundations and create another generation while she was yet beside him to take joy therein.

Now it was made clear that standing between him and his love, she blocked his work of husband and father. The suspicion grew to certainty and pricked her into fretfulness and bad temper. Jacob was not always patient, and sometimes she wept. She puzzled to know why life could still be good to her under these circumstances. She grew careless of it and ate things that were not wholesome for her and got wet and neglected her health. But these accidents left no mark. The shadow only laughed at her for her pains.

She heaped secret contempt on Heaven for plaguing

her last days with such cruelty. To bully a woman in sight of eighty seemed poor fun for Omnipotence; and yet it was no new thing. Had not the Supreme Being bullied her all her life?

She asked Philip Masterman this question, when they met in the osier beds on an autumn day.

"Hasn't he, Philip? Have He ever gived me an hour's peace? And haven't I took it patient and always bowed afore the blast?"

"No doubt. So do we all," said Mr. Masterman. "For why? We can't do nothing else. Humans can't kick against the pricks of God. The wounds got that way fester and never heal no more. We must bend to Him and be thankful we're built to bend."

Philip, a bald, old man, humped in the shoulders, could never speak without accompaniment of action. He had to be using his feet, or hands, and if not at work, made physical movement. Now he chopped with a bill hook till the white splinters flew.

"'Tis only the hard go down," he said. "If I whip these twigs with my hook, they take no hurt, because they give afore it and I lose my labour; but if I let go on the hard wood, then the hook bites and the timber falls. What I say is, God don't bite worth a damn, if you throw up the sponge and take it lying down. For my part I yowl out long afore I'm hit, like a dog do, when I see God coming; and I've often been let off with a fright just for that reason. 'Tis a tip worth giving a man, but I never heard no parson name it."

He lashed away and opened up a thicket above a watercourse.

"The brambles be growed here more'n I thought," he said.

She was in a mind to tell him of her trouble.

"It have come over me of late a bit sharp that my boy and his girl won't be able to wed till I'm gone, Philip."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"That's cause and effect, Charity Bickford. It's always going on, though we don't always see it working — lucky for us."

"And I wish I hadn't seen it working, for it's a deep trouble to me."

He considered.

"You can't help it. It falls out so. There's not enough for another here. 'Tisn't like it was when you wedded, five-and-fifty years agone. The world wanted grass for its thatches. But reeds be no more account than rexens [1] nowadays, and even the withies don't fetch what they did."

"'Twill all be Jacob's when I'm gone."

"A pity you told him, however. With the best feelings in the world, a chap can't forget a thing like that. It fouls his mind a bit — 'tis nature. However, you never was so spry and peart. I haven't seen you go so light on your feet for five year. So no decent mind have any right to look forward to what will happen. These things ain't in our hands — or shouldn't be."

Mrs. Bickford felt a little comforted by the reflection. She determined to be more Christian in future and go to church sometimes.

[1] Rushes.

Autumn was on the reed rond and the birches misted gold over their silver; the leaves fell into the water; the cherry shed her scarlet, and it dropped, red as blood, where the wild ducks cackled after sunset and the woodcock returned very weary from the secret way of his long flight. The willow foliage still clung thinly on the golden wands of the withies and made a flash of fire against the purple background of the woods. Fogs of autumn rose by night and crept lazily over the water. The fungus folk were afoot again and their cowls and canopies — purple and scarlet, olive and amber — studded the denes and dingles with many a little lodge and wigwam, like the encampments of gipsy fairies.

Charity stood and looked over the water. The leaves fluttered around her and a cock pheasant rocketed and soared over the tree tops. At her feet a little vole sat up and nibbled a sedge. There were dab chicks diving at the edge of the arundo canes. The plumes of the reed, that had shone wine-purple at high summer, were fading away. The brake was singing to the sere and would soon be beaten down over the empty nests of the moorhens within it.

A robin sang to Charity — a little under-song, as it seemed, for her ear alone.

Then came Jacob, cheerful and jolly. He carried a gun and a dead woodpigeon.

"His craw be full of acorns," he said; "but he's fat — there's fine eating on him. I know you doat on a woodpigeon, my old dear."

III

Through the winter and the sad, short days that promised nothing, the old woman lived on still dominated by a conviction that she lagged selfishly; that in her grandson's hidden heart there surely burned resentful fires at her delay. She grew nervous and almost afraid to meet him. She felt that each morning, when she descended to get him his breakfast, an apology was due from her for still being alive and hearty. Churchgoing failed to calm her and she abandoned it.

But she lived and weathered the winter well, and perceived that no link was loosened, no warning sign visible to indicate that the terminus was in sight. For reasons that psychology conceals, the darkness and gloom of winter left Charity stuborn, unmoved, a will to live still quick within her. The familiar phenomena crawled past in slow procession, but it was not until the sun climbed again and the bud swelled that the lowest notes of her ancient heart sounded and the now familiar shadow began to conquer. She knew that spring works with blood as well as sap, and felt that in the mating world none panted for a partner worse than Jacob and Melinda. Therefore spring smote her like an arrow, and then the shadow grew into a cruel, unresisting tyrant to be resisted no longer.

She sought pretexts and excuses for delay and welcomed the least of them. Jacob had an attack of bronchitis and she nursed him through it; a clutch of eggs were hatched out and the chickens required tending. There were letters to write about the withies, for

her grandson was a poor penman. But these and other chores all came to an end in May. Then she met Melinda moping, and the girl, rendered selfish by her own unfinished love, confessed with tears that it was hard to wait for Jacob.

"He's just told me what the withies be going to fetch, and it has cast me down a good bit," confessed the maiden.

Her struggle went on for another week, and then Charity yielded and began to think of a way. There was only one necessity to consider. The event must appear to come as a mishap, not by deliberate intention. She cast about for a means. Then Jacob warned her of a danger in the withy beds, and his unconscious speech affirmed her purpose, for she argued that Providence had thus planned to point a road over the last difficulty. Providence bullied her to the end and left her in no doubt of its direction. She resented her fate, but accepted it.

On a day in early May she rose with dawn, walked out through the gates of the morning and examined the world curiously — her mind for a moment innocent of its purpose. She was glad that the day broke fine and that the birds were singing. She listened for the reed warbler, whose note her husband had taught her five-and-fifty years ago. The warblers grew old and died doubtless, as all living things, but their song awoke punctually with budbreak and was eternal. It thrilled out now from the mazes of the reed rond; and above, the blackbird throbbed his music from the larch.

The ash has shaken out grape-purple inflorescence;

the lemon catkins were on the oak; the elms had thickened with a million flowers to hide the nest of the storm thrush; but they were gone and young green leaves now hid the ramage of the boughs. Beneath, the first bluebells began to weave Demeter's own veil through the underwood, and in the waters of the lee a pride of mary-buds flashed and reflected their gold. The sallow folk — osiers and willows — shone with silver tassels and the young green of the reed beds speared strong over the wreckage of last year. She heard the warning cry of the moorhen, and saw the water streaked with light, where the black coots swam to cover at her approach.

The maiden birches held her sight a moment, for the emerald flowed again over their purple branches and about the shining whiteness of their trunks.

Then she came to the place of her passing, and looked into the deep water here, and saw a fish speed away, frightened at her shadow. A plank spanned the water, and the plank was rotten. Her grandson had warned her against it. The water wound away in deep, oily eddies touched with light; and sometimes a submerged grass, answering to the current, flung up a long, green lock from the depths. It would spread shimmering through the crystal, then sink again.

Fifty yards away, at the edge of the bluebells, Philip Masterman worked about a woodstack. He marked Charity, supposed that she was out thus early for watercress, and, not seeking speech with her, hid behind the stack until she should be gone. Presently he heard a noise and peeped out. She had dragged up the rotten

plank from the water-crossing and, using her strength, had struck it hard upon the ground and broken it in half. Wondering what this might mean, Philip watched with his mouth open. Then he shut it and started violently, for the unexpected happened.

He saw the old woman throw both pieces of the broken board into the water, and then she opened her arms and sank forward. There was no splash: she seemed to settle upon the stream lightly as a withered leaf. He saw a swirl and a sharp ripple that opened out in wavelets and just touched the bank. Once the old gladiator's hand came up and seemed to appeal to the audience in the blue sky above her, then the current swept all smooth again and ran peacefully on. The broken board floated out upon the water and one fragment was brought up against a knot of kingcups that made an islet there; the other piece drifted forward. A small black thing also rose to the surface and followed the stream. But it was waterlogged and made poor progress. The staring man knew it for Charity's bonnet. In the silence the birds shouted their songs. Philip ran forward; then he drew up, thirty yards from the water; and then he turned back to the woodstack.

He drew a stick out of the stack and beat the earth with it fiercely. It was a safety valve to ease him of emotion. He swore and cursed and hammered the bluebells and wild garlic. He addressed his hand — a habit, for he often spoke to himself when alone, and at such times lifted his right hand and directed his speech at it.

"I've minded my own business for sixty years," he said angrily, "and I'll go on doing it. She wanted for to clear out, and who be going to blame the poor old toad for going?"

He went home to his breakfast presently, and when Jacob Tutt hastened over, an hour later, to know if the Mastermans had seen his grandmother, Philip answered that he had not.

"I'm terribly feared for her, for there's a bridge broke down, and she's nowheres about. I warned her against it, so 'tis no fault of mine if the worst has happened."

"I've got a new plank ready for that matter. I knowed 'twas wanted. If the old lady have falled in there, us must wait for nature to take its course. The current will run her to the deep part; but you can't drag the middle of the lee — 'tis fifty feet and more. However she'll be up in seven or eight days."

"I can't believe it," declared Jacob. "I can't picture it without her."

"I'll lay you often have, however. This lets your Melindy in, I suppose? Me and my wife will wish you joy, I'm sure."

They walked to the water, and Jacob marked his grandmother's bonnet stranded at a clump of growing reed-mace.

"It's all up," he said —"look there!"

"She's a goner sure enough. I'll go up for policeman, and you'd best to get out the punt and poke about. Please God she'll rise again. Did you ever hear tell about her teeth?"

"Her teeth?" asked the distracted young man, his eyes on the bonnet.

"Yes — there was two pounds worth of gold in her mouth — put there in her palmy days; but worth money still, no doubt, to an understanding man. Gold be gold — whether 'tis in your teeth or your pocket."

Jacob ran to the punt and Mr. Masterman followed him.

"You might promise me one thing to ease my mind in this terrible come-along-of-it," said the veteran. "You be master now, but you won't turn me off, will you? 'Tis the last thing the poor old lady would have wished."

THE RARE POPPY

Wesley Keat was never what you might call a sociable young man to his fellow-creatures; but, like a good few other people, though he didn't take too kindly to his own race, he was friendly enough to other orders of creation. And when we say a man or woman's unsociable, it's just our conceit, if you understand me, and we mean no more than that they're unsociable to ourselves. But if a party here and there finds something else more interesting than us, and better company, and more uplifting to the mind and soothing to the nerves, why shouldn't he seek it? I've known shepherds a lot happier with their sheep than with their kind, and horsemen better content along with their team than their fellow ploughboys; while as for dogs, there's scores of people who like 'em better and trust 'em better than humans. Again, 'tis a most commonplace and everyday thing to see the old maids wrapped up in cats and birds; and I've heard one of they neuter sort of females say in all sober honesty that she'd sooner live with a cage of song birds than a nursery of little children. And many there are who feel the same, though lacking the courage to tell it out.

Wesley Keat was set on none of these things, however. His mind turned to science, and from his youth up he loved growing things — the trees and herbs and ferns and grasses, and all the flower-bearing, fruit-bearing,

and seed-bearing creatures of the field. 'Twas in his blood to gather 'em and try to understand 'em; seeing which a schoolmaster, who had the training of the child, showed a rare spark of sense and encouraged him. For 'tis only the teacher with great wisdom looks out for the signposts in a child's nature, and suffers the young thing to bring out what's in it. 'Tis all very well to say, "Train up a child in the way he should go," but first you've got to find the way he should go; and the worst of schoolmasters is that they don't know any other way than their own, and when the child shows a bud here or a shoot there that's out of their experience and doubtful in their eyes, the first thing they're tempted to do is to prune it off.

Wesley Keat had luck, however, and fell in with an understanding man, who found the child's instinct turned to the science of flowers; so his great natural cleverness came to understanding ears in good time, and the boy rose from strength to strength till he was took on, at twenty years of age, at the famous nurseries to Launceston. Curnow's nurseries were known far and wide fifty years ago, before our flower gardens were thought so much about as now, and Curnow, a far-seeing and shrewd old man, summed up young Keat and reckoned to get his money's worth out of him and a bit more in course of time.

So Keat went to Curnow's, and, along of his knowledge and natural cleverness in the matter of green things, he soon raised the value of the stock, and showed he had a hand for the Cape heaths and other difficult hard-wooded shrubs, that was second to none. The

more tricky a plant might be, the harder Keat worked at it. And all the time he spent his evenings in study, and laboured at his botany, and crammed his head with the subject. And when he took his holiday, to Kew Gardens in London town he went, and put in his days there and increased his knowledge. He even rose so high as to write for a garden newspaper, and Curnow, who'd never done that, got to be properly proud of Wesley, because, along of his newspaper writings, he brought more fame to Curnow's, and more money likewise.

Yet, for all his success, you couldn't call Keat a bit of a sociable creature. He was put in authority at Curnow's after his second year, and if he'd shown half the kindness and unwearied patience with men and boys that he showed with fussy and difficult plants, no doubt the people would have been quite content; but he did not. He'd put himself a lot more out of the way for a seed, or a cutting, than he would for a fellow-being with an immortal soul; and so it came about that his equals, though they respected him, didn't like him, and those who were under him for the most part hated him.

And that brings me to Noah Tonkin's daughter, Mercy Tonkin. They both worked to Curnow's nurseries, and Noah himself was head out-of-door man, and very skilled in the business of the flowers; but Mercy, who had high education, was in the office, and kept the books. A pretty maid she was, yet frosty — dark, with a pale skin and brown eyes, and a strong character. But, strange to say, she was, for a woman, pretty

much what Wesley Keat was for a man. She hadn't the art of making friends, and didn't miss 'em, either. Yet she was fond of plants, too; but in her own little garden at home you could see her character by the very way she tended it.

She kept house for old Noah, who was a widow-man, and they were happy together, and he felt pretty hopeful she'd be an old maid. And if anybody doubted it, he'd point to her own little garden, and ask 'em if a girl who stamped her character on growing things, same as Mercy had done, would ever so far relax as to love a man.

"She rules her garden with a rod of iron," said old Noah, who loved a joke, but could never make his daughter see one. "You'll not find a weed dare to show its head there, and every plant has its appointed place, and be tied to its appointed stick, and have to bloom to its appointed day for fear of her displeasure. And you won't find an invalid plant, nor yet a sickly, nor yet a poor doer, for if a thing looks down in the mouth, out he comes. She won't have nothing die a natural death in her garden."

That was the girl's nature. And she was also shy and a bit hesitating with humans, though she never hesitated with plants.

And though both she and Wesley were as busy as bees, yet they met often enough on business, and people said that they might make a very good match, for they had a lot in common, seemingly. But others thought they had too much in common, and 'twould be flint on steel if they ever tried courting.

The truth about love be this: it very seldom strikes two hearts simultaneous. A man either gets the start of the woman, or the woman begins quicker than the man. And often only the love of the one made visible will start it in t'other party. For there's some plain-featured women will fall in love most furious if they find a man look at 'em twice; because to think a man could ever love 'em at all be quite enough to turn their heads and start them with a fine and lasting passion. And that's why ugly women make better wives most times than pretty ones, for they be bent on showing the man that loved 'em he made no mistake.

Sure enough there grew up to be a sort of understanding between Keat and Mercy. He was above her in his position, but her cleverness and character put her on level terms, and a thing like that didn't count anyway where love is. They were practical about it, however, and didn't keep company or anything of that sort, but just worked hard and saved money, and had their eyes on each other, and minded their own ambitions meanwhile. They met at choir practice, for both were chapel members, and singing was the only pleasure they allowed themselves. A rather fishy sort of courting, in the judgment of everyday people, and some folks prophesied they'd never come together and be man and wife till they was too old to work, or shine in any way. But others said it would happen on a sudden, and doubted not they understood each other, and would announce they was tokened some fine day when we least expected it. How far they'd got, however, none knew, when the surprising thing happened, and

Wesley Keat was offered a great task by his master.

For Curnow was making a bid then to be one of the first in the land for new and choice plants, and as all other tip-top concerns were sending out collectors to foreign lands for plants and seeds and rare things, he decided to sink a bit of money and do the same. And though Keat had never been out of England before, he was so well up in plants and their ways, and so learned in all the best collections in England, that they reckoned that they couldn't do better than send this native son. He had character, you see, which was the vital thing. He was strong, and knew his own mind, and showed himself to be a leader of men; so old Curnow went "nap" on him, as they say, and arranged an expedition to an outlandish part of the world, and engaged a young Cornish doctor called Trecarrow to go along with Wesley to Thibet. They was to get the niggers there, and everything was planned out, and an arrangement made with the Government. A formidable task, you might say, but the man rose to it like a trout to a fly. He didn't show much, being the sort that never winks an eyelid before good fortune or bad; but no doubt he glowed in secret to think of his great chance, and no doubt he reckoned he'd do wonders, and astonish the gardening world with his finds when he came home-along.

So he went, and, though busy enough before the start, he had time to see a bit of Mercy Tonkin, and come to an understanding with her. From her father I heard it, and how he got it was exceptional, for he weren't in Mercy's secrets more than anybody else.

But just after Keat set forth on his travels, she must have been in a soft mood for a minute; and she told old Noah that if all went well with the expedition, and Wesley covered himself with glory, as seemed like enough, then she and he were to be tokened before the world on his return.

"A frosty bargain, in my opinion," Tonkin said to his girl. "Couldn't you give him no more hope than that? 'Tis poor love-making that hangs on a man's luck."

And Mercy had answered her father in these words —

"That's what he said, and it weren't for me to say more. He knows best."

Well, they understood each other, no doubt, and Noah didn't argue about it. But he guessed that Mercy wouldn't have let the future hinge on young Keat's good fortune if he'd offered for her in a less cold-blooded and calculating sort of way. He doubted, too, for it struck him that an ambitious man like Keat, if he came home famous, might find himself a good peg higher in the world after; and then he might forget what he'd proposed to Mercy, and look a bit higher for his fortune.

However, that was a thing that could only be thought, and I didn't think it. To my mind it looked as if Keat might be acting from a sporting motive not to tie the girl if he failed; and as Mercy seemed to be satisfied with the arrangement, her father shut his mouth about it, and hoped, as an honourable and righteous man, the traveller would not disappoint her when he came home again.

She heard from Wesley — very short letters — and his master got long ones. We learned in the nurseries that all was going fine with the hunt, and that Keat and Trecarrow and a third white man, a scientific chap, had got together twenty experienced savages, who knew the wilds, and that they'd started in good trim and full of hopes. And then there was a long time when we heard nought, while they was in the wilderness, grubbing up fine things that no white man had ever yet set eyes upon for certain. And then came wonderful good news, and we'd hardly done being pleased about it, when cruel bad news followed on top. For first we heard that Keat had come through all right, and got twenty cases of precious plants, and was making for the coast, to ship 'em off so quick as possible; and then, a fortnight later, came the shattering tale that all was lost, and that some heathen hillmen had fallen foul of the people and stopped the expedition, and killed two or three of his niggers, and took him and the doctor and the scientific chap prisoners.

It got to be a Government affair, and it was six months before Wesley and Trecarrow and the other white man came back to England in a very poor state of mind and body. For they'd been treated terrible bad, and they told a shameful tale of their sufferings. And then it came out how, according to Trecarrow, it was all Keat's fault that they had messed it up; while, according to Keat, it was all the doctor's fault.

I heard Trecarrow myself, for I was in the office when he came to see Mr. Curnow, and he looked ten

years older than when he started — a proper wreck, in fact.

"That fool," he said, meaning Wesley Keat, "spoiled all by his overbearing and bullying ways. He treated the niggers as though they were a lot of dogs, and worked them off their legs, and never cared a button about their own manners and customs, which are the first things you've got to consider if you want foreigners to please you. He kept bleating about 'England,' and the way Englishmen work, and all that nonsense — as if the Thibetans from the mountains cared a cuss about England and what we did at home! Why should they? He said they must be shown what he expected from the first, and he treated 'em like machines instead of friends, until they got to hate the man, and I was often afraid they would knock him on the head. And then, when we'd come through, and hadn't twenty-five more miles to get down, we ran up against a rough-and-ready race of folk, who hadn't any use for white men anyway, and wanted most careful handling and flattering. He ought to have made a fuss over them, and given them presents, and buttered them up. Instead of which, finding they were a lot of cut-throat dogs, Keat goes and treats them according, and tries to browbeat 'em and talk 'England' to 'em. And, before we knew it, they were on to us. Our expedition didn't care a straw. They told the enemy niggers that I was a good man, and that Keat was a bad one; and our own beggars helped to burn the plant cases, and danced round the bonfires with the rest! Six months of the hardest

work mortal men ever did was all gone in smoke and flame in an hour! I thought they put us on top of the cases; but the chief of the gang was a smart old devil, and contented himself with a little gentle torture. Then it became a question of money, and then of threats, and at last the soldiers came up and took us away. And every bit of the trouble is Keat's fault, for a more obstinate, pig-headed, tactless ass never went out of England to worry a lot of niggers. And if there were many whites like him in the East, it would soon be 'good-bye' to the Empire. He's got no more than he deserved, and it's thanks to me he's alive today."

Curnow knew very well the tale might be true. For he'd only thought of Keat as a strong man, who could make himself obeyed. He never calculated that his way, which did all right in Cornwall, mightn't suit the savages in Thibet. But so it was; and as for Wesley, his story, of course, took quite a different shape. It was all Trecarrow's fault, according to him, because the doctor never supported him, and didn't care a button for discipline, and backed up the niggers and their head man, and gave them liquor from the stores, and was often as drunk as a fly himself of an evening. In fact, a task difficult enough at best had been made doubly difficult by Trecarrow, and Trecarrow had disgraced the name of Englishman and made it a byword in Thibet. And then, when the final trouble came, instead of standing together like one man and putting a firm face on it, the niggers had taken their cue from Trecarrow, and made friends with the enemy, and sided against him and let him down.

Wesley was terrible bitter about it, and never spoke to the doctor no more.

"One thing's certain," he said to Curnow a bit later, "if I'd brought back all I collected, there'd have been a stir made, for the country is rich in amazing stuff not known to cultivation, let alone new species altogether. And I shall go again, as sure as I stand here, whether it's for you or for somebody else."

"You certainly won't go for me, my son," said old Curnow. "This racket has run into four figures, and I'm not going to try again — too old."

"It's a cruel tragedy," declared Keat, "a shameful thing, when I was actually through with it, as you may say, and I knew your name and mine would be tacked to a dozen new plants in a year's time. But I'm not beat. I'll go again and I'll take a man next time, not a drunken, worthless dog like Trecarrow."

Old Curnow looked at him. He was a kindly master, and always patient with young fellows, and a good working Christian, if ever I met one.

"Next time you go, Wesley, you take a pinch of sense and a larger patience, and the wit to understand that black men ain't white ones," he said. "And when you talk of 'England,' remember that England haven't made her way in the world by ordering the folk about, but by the good old motto of 'Live and let live.' We can't all be teetotal because you are; we can't all live on ambition and the thought of fame because you do; and we can't all run about to do your bidding, if you ask us to do things that's against our customs and our daily use. Learn from this to be larger-minded and see

other points of view beside your own. There's a lot of difference between being a leader of men and a driver of men, my boy; and while the world will always have use for leaders, it very soon won't have no use for drivers. The drivers will find themselves driven ere long, and you'll live to see it, if I don't. And that's about all there is to it. So get to work; there's plenty waiting for your cleverness."

I think Keat was grateful, even if he hadn't the art to show it. He changed a bit from that time, and was milder in his manners. He even allowed he might have made a mistake here and there; but his pride didn't slack, and you couldn't say he got more friendly to the men. They weren't broken-hearted over his bad luck, by any means, and the kindest and easiest among 'em had a bit of a laugh at his expense.

Only one heart burned for him, as Noah Tonkin told me, when we was digging tulip bulbs together, and that was his daughter's.

"She'd like to tear the eyes out of our heads when she hears us chaffing about it," he said.

"Consoled the man, no doubt?" I answered.

"As to that, I can't tell. You know what secret birds they be. I wouldn't say they've done more than pass the time of day since he came back. And my own impression is that the stiff-necked beggar is going to keep the bargain he made before he went, and say no more about it."

Well, that was an astonishing thing.

"In face of the way she champions him?" I asked.

"He don't know that Mercy champions him," an-

sweerd the girl's father. "She'd rather die than let him think she was fighting his battles."

"They beat me," I said. "Never heard tell about such an uncomfortable pair. No human nature in 'em that I can see."

"They'll do what they'll do," prophesied Noah.

"Hast heard about his poppy?" I asked. And Tonkin had not, so I told him.

Wesley came into the propagating house a week after he was home, and brought with him three poppy heads — small, hairy things.

"All I brought home," said Keat. "From where I found it, and by certain signs, I believe it's a great wonder. I held those capsules in my closed hand for three days, while they were ill-treating me. I never parted from them. I kept 'em hid in my cheek half a day once. It's a sacred poppy out there, and some of the men had seen it; but they wouldn't gather it, or let me. So I stole out of my tent by night and got 'em, and never let 'em go again."

His story came to be known through the gardens, and the seed sprang all right, and there was a good deal of interest to find what it would turn to. It came up like a weed, and made strong plants, with nothing much out of the common about them. But Curnow was as keen as any of us, for if it turned out a fine thing and made good, there was money in it, of course. And meantime Noah Tonkin spoke to me again about his daughter.

"Nothing's happened," he said. "The man holds off, and don't say a word about the past, and she's far too proud to do so; but in secret I know he's more to

her than ever, and it may or may not be the same with him; but one thing's certain — he'll never come to her a defeated man."

"You can only leave it to nature," I told him. "Perhaps he's waiting for the poppy. It won't go far to pay Curnow for his losses, but it may do a bit for Keat, and lessen the smart."

However, as luck would have it, the rare poppy was a failure, for a poorer, meaner little creature you never saw — bad colour, bad shape, bad everything — and it seemed strange to think a man had gone through fire and water for such rubbish, and dreamed dreams about it, no doubt, and thought he was bringing home a wonder, very likely. Sacred it might have been in Thibet, but it weren't worth twopence in England.

Curnow laughed when he saw it out — a little, dingy weed that wouldn't have tempted a butterfly or called to a bee.

"Well, Wesley, if your other treasures were no better than this, my son," he said, in a kind voice and with a twinkling eye, that robbed his words of their sting, "'tis as well you left 'em behind, I'm thinking."

So the poppy was cast out on the rubbish heap, and, after a bit of chaff, it was forgot. And time moved on, and Keat wrote a little book about his travels that was published. But it didn't make no stir. He gave one or two of the best educated amongst us his book, and he gave a copy to Mercy Tonkin. And she fed on it in secret, so her father told me, and wrote afterwards to Wesley and thanked him, and said it was very interest-

ing. Just a cold sort of letter, like herself, you may be sure, for though I daresay the girl fairly panted to write some nice, pretty things about it, that self-conscious was she, and that frightened of showing a glimpse of her hidden heart, that she let it go with scant thanks, and instead of praising it up hill and down dale, and saying what a wonder he was to have done such things, and mourning his bad luck, and so on, she only ended up by telling him the misprints, of which she found five.

Then, I suppose, they must have drifted apart, though there's no doubt all the time the man was longing for a sign which Mercy couldn't give, and she was hungering for a word which he couldn't speak. They were built so; and with that sort the mischief is that none can help them. Once let 'em get together, and they'll face the world and fight for themselves like a pair of missel-thrushes; but to bring 'em together is impossible for outsiders. They must follow their own natures, and, oft as not, with such peculiar and wilful creatures, their qualities keep 'em apart, for all their sense, and they're quite powerless to break through the barriers that character has built up round 'em. Keat went on his way, and worked harder than ever, and grew more silent, if possible. But we saw signs that he'd learned his lesson, for he seemed to begin gradually to recognize that every man has his rights and his hopes and his fears, and 'tis every other man's part to respect his neighbour's interests. I went so far as to praise him once, being old enough for his grandfather, though,

of course, only a gardener, without all his learning.

"Keat," I said, "I do believe you begin to see that one man's as good as another."

"No," he said, "not that. There's no equality. But I begin to see the worst have their rights, same as the best."

Then came the upshot, and the terrible curious accident that makes this tale worth telling. Not till next spring did it happen, and meantime that ridiculous man and woman went on with nothing between them but their silly selves. And then it happened that old Tonkin fell ill, with a tissick on his chest that kept him a bed-lier for a week. And three days after he was taken sick, Wesley Keat called to know how he fared. It may have been for hidden reasons that he done so, or it may have been just for friendship and nought else, though not the sort of things one would have expected from him; but he went. He called on his way to Curnow's, though it took him half a male out of the road, and, being early, he found Mercy Tonkin giving a touch to her garden before she went to work.

She was bending down, training some poor creature to a stick, that would much rather have gone free, no doubt, and, hearing Wesley click the latch of the gate, she jumped round. But she couldn't rise quick enough, and he was beside her, and stretched out his hand, and waited while she took off her garden glove.

He saw she was startled, and appeared worried about something, so he doubted not that old Noah might be worse.

"Good morning, Mercy," he said. "I thought I'd

start early, and look in here on my way, to know how your father was, before I went to work."

"He's no worse. Doctor isn't troubled about him. He'll be all right in a few days."

"I'm glad to hear it. My, how your garden's grown! I haven't seen it for a good while now."

"Not since you came home."

He cast his eye over it, and she flushed up, all about nothing, seemingly, and kept getting between him and the flowers.

"Don't you stop now; you'll be late, and so shall I, if I don't go in and get ready. Good-bye, and thank you for coming."

But though no doubt he'd have taken the hint quick enough any other time, she found herself talking in vain. The man stood staring like a stuck pig.

"What! Good Powers!" he said, his eyes on her garden. "Get out of the way, Mercy — let me see!"

Now she was red as a rose, and I'll lay she'd never been so put about in all her life before.

"There's nothing to see. I've asked you to go, haven't I?"

With that he did a most amazing thing, for he took her by the shoulders and fairly spun her round out of the way. Then he went alongside the flower-beds, where everything was standing to attention in the morning light — all stiff and straight, presenting arms like flower-soldiers, and not a leaf or bud out of place.

"How dare you?" she cried. "You ought to be ashamed!"

"My poppy! Oh, Mercy — you wonder!"

Right in the midst of the garden it was lording it there, the poor little, miserable weed, as if it was the queen of the show. And for certain it was — to Mercy Tonkin.

"How could you?" he asked, just dumbfoundered and simple and human, and knocked off his high horse for once, like a common man.

"Because — because I'm a silly fool, I suppose."

"I know better," he said. "'Tis because I had it in my hand for three days, and because I suffered for it, and, above all, because it is worthless to all the rest of the world — all but you and me. And, before God, 'tis the most precious flower that He ever made, and dearer to me than all the flowers in the world from this day forward, Mercy!"

That was pretty tall for Wesley — a proper bit of human nature — and I'm sure the maiden would have rose to like heights if it had been in her to do so; but she couldn't.

There was tears in her eyes, however, and her voice was broke, but all she said was: "I'd never have put it there — never — only — only I thought you'd not see my garden again!"

So, after all, the man had brought his poppy home for something better than gold or fame.

They were married in three months from that time, and what their love-making was like is only known to their guardian angels, for no man or woman ever saw them so much as smile into each other's faces. But they vanished from among us before very long, for Keat, he won high advancement a year after, and was

taken on at Kew Gardens. And now he lives up that way with Mercy, and they've got a brace of very nice children, and are quite the Londoners, so old Noah tells us.

He went to pay 'em a visit last year, and said they was grown so fine that he feared for himself, and scarce liked to sit on their velvet chairs.

"They have a little garden, however," he told me, "and if you'd seen it at the other end of the world, you'd still have known it for my Mercy's. Some brave, fine things in it, however, and some I've never seen, for all my experience."

"Be the rare poppy there?" I asked.

"It's there in a place of honour," he said.

"'Tis the link betweeen 'em and ordinary humans," I told Noah. "So long as that ugly little beast be in their garden, you needn't fear for 'em."

THE REVOLVER

I

It is a very common thing for a business to run in families. You'll find it with kings, and you'll find it with tinkers, and you'll find it with all manner of callings in life below the one and above the other; yet, as a curious fact, you'll find that it don't happen with policemen. Very seldom do you hear of a constable's son going into his business, and so I'm one of the exceptions that make the rule, for not only my father, but my grandfather before him, were both in the Force; and very good men, I doubt not, though, along of one thing and another, they never rose to be inspectors like myself. "Peelers," they were called, or "Bobbies," after the famous man that invented them; but that name is dying out in our time, though there's still plenty of slang terms for us in common mouths.

Grandfather Thomas Lobb and his son, Thomas Lobb, both worked in the place of their birth, St. Tid, a Cornish church-town famous the world over for its slate quarries; and when my turn came I, Thomas Lobb, of the third generation, done the same, though I can well remember how my mother begged me to go into the quarries, where most of our rising generation of young men went as a matter of course.

But there it was; the feeling for law and order had

got deep in me through my forebears, and I took to the truncheon as a matter of course. To Plymouth I went to learn my business, and then to Launceston; and then in the fulness of my powers, and with a very good record of fifteen years, I got promoted to be inspector of St. Tid, and, thank God, my father lived to see it.

'Twas like Moses and the Promised Land for father; because, though his brain power had never lifted him to be inspector, and he retired on his pension as a plain constable, yet he was permitted to live long enough to see his own son uplifted; and he often said 'twas just as good as if he'd got the advancement himself. He departed this life in great peace and content three years after I came to St. Tid.

And now the line of us will break, for I've got nought but girl childer, though so fast the world wags, that they say by the time they've growed we shall have female constables as a matter of course. None of my maids feel inclined that way, however, and I hope no such upheaval as women in blue will happen in a Christian land — at any rate, in my time.

Of course I've seen my share of strange things, and larned a bit about the wonders of human nature and the dark ways of crime, but never no stranger thing than the business of Ned Treby and Jack Tonkin came to my notice. For it showed — what policemen, as well as common people, are too apt to forget — that as a chain's no stronger than the weakest link, so a man's no stronger than the worst blood in his veins, though the worst may be qualified by the best. But our natures are not brand new things handed to us at birth;

they are a mixture of other natures that went before ours — a mixture of many ingredients, some good and some bad. And the proportions of the mixture no man can tell, or how the mixing is done, or why this man resembles his grandfather in his manners and customs, while his brother takes after some other relation — on his mother's side so likely as not. 'Tis a hidden book of wisdom, and whether mortal man will ever be wise enough to read it, who can tell?

Take Ned Treby, for instance. To the very colour of him he was different from his family. They were dark, like most of us Cornish folk, but he was fair; they were cheerful and everyday people in their ways and ideas, but he was stand-offish, lonely, and melancholy. Never had no use for company, kept his own counsel, listened a lot, but spoke seldom.

His mother said he was the spit of her great-uncle — a man hung for sheep-stealing a hundred year ago. Her own grandmother had said so a year or two after Ned was born. But, of course, Mrs. Treby never told her son when he grew up, because it would have hurt his feelings. He was her eldest, and then came Arthur — as like his father as two peas in mind and body — and then followed two sisters and another brother, all dark and cheerful and commonplace.

But Ned had the brains, and at thirty-two the man rose to be second foreman at the quarries, and was in very good repute and renown with his masters, though little liked by his mates. He was hard and unsociable, and all for the Company rather than the staff; and another thing was that he went neither to church nor

chapel, which made his mother and father very uneasy about him.

In St. Tid, to our pride, we can say that there's more chapels than public houses — a very rare achievement for any English village — and though a sprinkling of us were Church of England, by far the greater number went to chapel. There were various persuasions, of course, but the Wesyelans came out strongest, as you'd expect, for the great Wesley himself preached the glad tidings to St. Tid, and there's a gallery in the quarries to this day known as "Wesley's Pulpit," because from that spot he preached a fiery sermon to our great-grandfathers, and the echoes of those brave words still resound through North Cornwall.

We love our chapels, and scheme to make 'em inviting, not with vain shows, but with comfortable pews and heating apparatus and organs and such-like. And we're great singers, for choir practice is our first pleasure, and in our singing competitions you'll find the St. Tid men and maidens do oftentimes come out first in the county.

But Ned Treby was no chapel member nor yet did he go to church, and though none could point a finger at him, or question his conduct or morals, all felt that he hadn't got grace, and would find himself in a parlous fix if the hour of temptation came.

I knew him very well, and never found nothing to quarrel with beyond a certain liberty of speech he allowed himself. He'd say, for instance, that good behaviour was a matter of nature, not religion, and talk

about human beings in a way I quite agreed with, but didn't approve of hearing on his lips. Because there's much we older men must conceal, and though young Treby was a thinker, and had arrived at certain opinions which couldn't hurt you, nor yet me, the fact remained that those opinions were no good to boys and girls, and might have led the yonnger people into lawlessness if followed.

So I watched him, feeling there might be danger in the man, and I tried to make him take up a bit of sport, so as to mingle with other men, and not lead such a solitary life. And I went out of my way to bring him acquainted with Jack Tonkin, an open-hearted sort of chap, strong where Ned was weak.

Of course, they knew one another well enough, for Jack was a rockman at the quarries, and under Treby's orders at any time; but outside the works they seldom met, though next door neighbours, and I felt that with a little skill they might be brought together and become friends, as men so different in character often will.

I thought to myself that sandy, silent Ned, with the grey eyes and white eyelashes and cold, clever voice, might get a little heat and heart from the red-faced, black-haired Jack, who had the nature of a nice dog, and took every man, woman and child for his friend as a matter of course. And I also reckoned that if Treby won a little milk of human kindness from Tonkin, Tonkin in his turn might get a bit of wisdom from Ned. Because, with his genial disposition and trustful character, Tonkin hadn't more sense than, please God, he should have. He suffered from a fiery temper

that threatened danger sometimes, though 'twas always gone like a thunderstorm the next minute, and no man was quicker to beg pardon for wrong done than him.

Well, I figured it out that these two might work each other a power of good, and to this day I won't admit that I was mistaken. If Jack had tempted Treby to play cricket, or try his hand at a bit of wrestling or shooting, and if Ned had been interested enough in Jack to give him some advice and enlarge his opinions, and make him more broad-minded, much good might have happened to both.

In fact, I believe the good was in sight, and Treby had gone so far one spring as to say he'd join the cricket club, when the trouble began. Then, from standing on the brink of friendship, as you might say, the men became fierce enemies. They both got interested in a girl at the same time, and, as the devil's own luck would have it, she was the same girl. Little Philippa Bunt — sexton Bunt's grandchild she was — an orphan who came to keep house for sexton after his wife died. A very nice lass no doubt, and the men both took a liking to her at the same time, so all my cleverness was wasted.

II

For with two such strong characters in their different ways, it was quite impossible that any friendship could hold between 'em under those circumstances, and just as I began boasting to my wife what a clever thing I'd done, and how Ned Treby and Jack Tonkin would live to thank me some day, if the trouble didn't begin.

And, of course, my wife knew all about it long before I did.

"'Twill take a pearter chap than you to make them men friends, for they'll be biting enemies before harvest," says Emma, my wife, to me. And when I asked her why for, she explained her meaning. "It's like this," she said. "We women know, if you men do not, that Treby's been after little Philippa Bunt ever since she came here. And he's not the man to take 'No' for an answer, neither. He didn't get up to be quarry foreman at his age without something behind it. He's clever and he's crafty, and he's very much in love — so there you are."

"What then?" I asked her. "Why not? And what's that got to do with Jack Tonkin, anyhow?"

"Only this," she answered. "Coming up along from Silver Thimble Farm two nights agone in the dimpsy light, I over-got a pair of lovers mooning side by side, and dead to the world, as lovers will be. 'Twas by the short cut nigh Dead Horse Hole — you know — and I was going past, not recking who they might be, when both of 'em gave me good-evening. And Philippa was one and Jacky Tonkin t'other! So there you have it."

"To think," I said, "that a girl barely wife-old should be carrying on with two men at her tender age!"

"She's that sort," declared my Emma. "When you get them slim maidens, so quick-eared and quick-eyed as a mouse, with full lips that move and twinkle to their thoughts, and pretty, sly, sleepy eyes, same as Philippa have got, then you can take it that men interest 'em more than any created thing. And they interest men,

because nothin's so lightning quick as a man to answer that sort of signal. Now, with the plump, slow-moving, nice-minded maidens like our Jenny, or Sarah 'tis different. Men be only just a detail of life to them — not everything. Not that I'm saying a word against old Bunt's grandchild. She's quite right to take her time, and taste both of 'em before she takes either. For her peace and happiness I'd advise Jacky, but if she wants to go up in the world and be a lady some day, then the sandy one's most like to suit her."

" 'Twill be a nice choice, and I hope she'll choose well," I said; " and, whichever she chooses, her husband will have an enemy, I'm afraid. But the difference is that, if Ned Treby loses her, he'll never forgive; but if Jack does, he'll rage like the sea for a bit, but he'll get over it before a month of Sundays."

" 'Tis for her to decide, and I hope the beaten chap will be reasonable," said my wife.

A very good wish, too, but vain as it proved, for the men soon found out what had happened, and were at each other's throats in no time. In fact, Ned met Philippa sitting down by the sea at Trebarwith with Tonkin, and, not a week after, when he was up over Brown Willhayes way, rabbit shooting with some friends on the moors, Jack came across the girl and the foreman taking a long walk together of a Saturday afternoon.

No doubt they both put it very straight to her, and no doubt she was quite equal to 'em, being that sort of girl. Then my wife, knowing the young thing had no women to advise her, talked with Philippa, and

warned her that 'twas playing with fire to keep two such men running after her at one and the same time.

"If you once get a name for philandering, my dear, you'll end by keeping that name — as well as your own," says Emma. "Love is love, and a parlous invention at best, and if there's two men love you — want you, as all the church-town knows — then don't try playing off one against the other, or anything like that, for you're far too young for them May games."

Philippa looked up under her black eyebrows, and smiled a smile that would soften a flint.

"I'm not up to no May games, Mrs. Lobb," she said. "I like Ned and I like Jack, and I'm just going on in a very quiet and proper way till I see which I like best. And I tell 'em I won't be hurried. They've both got their good points, and their bad ones, I reckon; and if I could have one to work for me and t'other to play for me, I'd take both."

And her only just eighteen!

My wife gave her all the law and the prophets after that, and warned her that such shameful ideas very ill became the daughter of a parish clerk and the granddaughter of a sexton. For she was Church of England, I must tell you, and, as it came out after, that was one of the things that most inclined the girl to Ned Treby. Because, with his easy opinions, he said that after they were married, she might worship where she liked, and he'd never trouble her; whereas Jack Tonkin was a Wesleyan to the marrow in his bones and a tower of strength in the choir. And he always declared to Philippa 'twould be an unkind thing of a Sunday if she

was to go to pray to God in one place while he done the same in another. She granted that in the end, I believe, and told the man it shouldn't come between them, and that she'd say her prayers where he pleased. And she also told him that religion weren't her strongest point, whether or no, and that if ever she loved a man with a proper fierce and fiery love, she'd pray to any god he fancied — or the devil if he liked that better. Which shook up Tonkin quite a good bit, no doubt.

Well, this queer tale be about what happened after Philippa made up her mind, not what went before. We were mildly interested to see which it would be and some said that with a girl like this — a proper changeling, so to say, and packed full of cleverness, but quite different from most St. Tid girls — she'd end by flinging over both men. But some again doubted not that like would go to like, and that Ned, with his fine prospects and money in the bank and outrageous opinions, would most attract her. For they thought that such a girl might find a straightforward, sporting character as Jack too much like all other fine fellows, without quite enough spice of mischief and lawlessness and novelty to suit her.

But, of course, everybody was wrong, and with a creature like Philippa you might be sure they would be. She took Jack, and in twenty-four hours the men had their first bitter row over it. And a bloodstained row, too. They lived side by side, and had long been in and out of each other's houses any time morning or night, thanks to the friendship I was working up between 'em; and on the day that Jack gave out at the

quarries he'd got tokened to Philippa Bunt, Treby stood in wait for him at his own door, and insulted him before the people, and told him it never should be, and a lot of other bare-faced things. Cold as a snake he was, though red-hot inside, no doubt; but the upshot came to blows, and they fought there and then, and though Tonkin was the stronger and heavier man, such was the fury of Ned in that hour that he beat t'other cruel about the head, and finally knocked him out with a right cross on the jaw. A few looked on, and Arthur Treby tried all he knew to stop his brother; but Tonkin wouldn't have that. He bade no man interfere, and none did; though one chap — Amos Hawke it was — had sense enough to come to the police-station for me. I was there under five minutes; but by that time Jack had been knocked out and Ned was gone into his own home.

Tonkin soon came to his senses, and I felt sorry I had stopped to see him do so, for he uttered a lot of very rash and reckless threats against t'other man — such things as a chap does say when he's got a rare good hiding and hasn't deserved it. I bade him shut up at last, and took him in his house to his aunt; and we cleaned him up and reasoned with him. But it looked only too sure he'd break the peace at the first opportunity and get a bit of his own back.

Three days later, however, a strange thing happened, for he met Treby in the street and kept his temper, and asked the foreman if he'd fight him again man to man, fair and open, with fists or gloves, which he liked; and

Ned said he was sorry for what he'd done in a temper, and made a frank and honourable apology.

"'Twas only the devil helped me to lick you," he said. "You understand, I hope, that my life's ruined. But that ain't your fault, John Tonkin. And I'm sorry for what I've done. And I want peace."

Well, seeing he'd won Philippa, Jack couldn't very well do more to the other man. He'd have dearly liked to fight again, but as Treby gave him best and wouldn't take him on, there was nothing more for a good chapel member to do but forgive him, and let it go at that. Which Tonkin did do, in a large and friendly spirit; though behind the scenes he wasn't so amiable, and a good few could testify afterwards, including Retallack, at the Grey Horses, and Polwarn, at the Green Man, that Tonkin said it wasn't a fair thing, and he'd dearly like to let the coward know what it felt like to be hammered and knocked out. Then bad blood was made by others, and the position grew very dangerous in my opinion, for Ned got at Philippa again, and tried all he knew to make her change her mind, and said many foul things against Tonkin to her. But she was already feared at what had happened, and kept straight enough, and was true to Jack. At last the girl grew in fear of her life from the foreman, for I believe he went a bit queer in his brain at this time, and haunted Philippa, and threatened her with all manner of fearful things if she didn't marry him. The men had another row in the Grey Horses a fortnight later, and it took half the chaps in the bar to keep 'em apart. Then, when I

expected every day to get an ugly job and was just going to take my wife's advice and talk to the manager of the quarries about it, the knot was cut in a very mysterious manner, and Ned Treby suddenly disappeared from St. Tid.

III

Of course that was where I came in, though I'm bound to say nothing that I could do threw much light on the case.

For it was a very strange event, and on inquiry it looked as though Ned hadn't planned to go or made any arrangements for so doing.

Arthur Treby brought me the news — him and his mother. They came to the station at an early hour, and said as the foreman's bed hadn't been pressed that night. For when his mother called him, just afore six, he made no answer, not being there, and 'twas clear he hadn't been home. I asked how it was they didn't know he was missing the night afore, and the distracted woman explained.

"We never sit up for him," she said. "Of late, since his trouble, he's took to wandering about of a night, and comes home at all hours. Arthur was last in yesterday, wasn't you, Arthur?"

"I was," replied Ned's brother. "I came in somewhere about ten o'clock, or a thought after, and seeing Ned wasn't home, I left the door unlocked for him. But he never came back."

I asked 'em when he'd been last seen, and they said

after his tea. Then he was down in the garden digging for a bit, and, by the same token, his mother was glad, for it looked as if he was getting back his peace of mind and taking to his old ways.

I made inquiries round about, but not a soul appeared to know anything of Treby, and none had seen him the night afore. He hadn't been to any of the drinking shops, neither. At the quarries all was right, and his books in perfect order, and at Bolitho's Bank, where he kept his money, they'd not seen him and nothing had been took out. So 'twas clear he'd not gone of his own free will, and, for my part, I reckoned he hadn't gone far. I figured it out in my policeman mind to my wife, for Emma's a good listener, and more than that. She'll often come by a short cut to a point where the man's brain goes step by step, and though short cuts ain't much good to a constable, and slow and sure is best, yet my wife often sees daylight afore I do, and I never deny her the credit of a witty thought, you may be sure.

"'Tis one of two things," I argued. "Either the man's met with an accident, or else he's done away with himself. If 'tis an accident, he'll be found, and if he's took his life, he may be found; but, on the other hand, he may not. For my part, I believe he's done himself in. But time will show."

Emma didn't agree, however.

"He's not that sort," she said; "too strong-minded. He wouldn't throw up the sponge and leave Tonkin and that girl to be happy ever afterwards. If he'd reached such a fearful pitch of mind that he didn't want to live

no more, be sure he'd see that Jack Tonkin didn't live neither — nor yet the girl."

"I've never had a murder and suicide," I said. "Murder, yes, and suicide, yes; but never the two together. However, Jack's all right, and so's his sweetheart."

Good search was made, and no stone left unturned for five miles round about. But not a clue offered. The man was spirited from our midst, as it seemed, and we at the station soon heard the usual silly questions as to what we were there for, and how we thought we earned our money.

Then Ned Treby was found, and though I didn't find him, 'twas my own youngest daughter, Betty, that did.

She was blackberrying along with a few other little girls on the seaward slope above Trebarwith Strand, and working up nigh Dead Horse Hole, as the deserted quarries were called, she sat to rest a bit on a fence that ran round the pit, to keep the sheep and cattle from falling in. On one side the place was steep and fell sheer to the water in the hole, and 'twas up there our Betty was got; but on the other side, though the fall to the water might have been twenty feet, all lay open — a place of broken slate — along the edge of the pit. A lonely spot it was, favoured by lovers and hemmed in by stunted trees that rose above the surrounding thickets. And then my little girl saw what nearly made her jump off the fence into the dark water down under, for there was a human floating there, face upward. In fact, little more than his head was to be seen, and he 'peared to be looking up at her out of the pool.

Betty went cold, but she was a policeman's daughter, and a very intelligent child. And I gave her full praise for what she done that day, and so did St. Tid when it came to be known. Not a word she said, but called t'other little things and led 'em away from Dead Horse Hole up the hill; and she kept dumb about what she'd seen. But when she got home, she was white as a dog's tooth, poor little tibby lamb, and hardly had wind to tell us the ugly thing she'd seen.

I doubted little who 'twas, and, though cruel sorry for all concerned, had to pat myself on the back, because it was very clear to all understanding people that I'd been right, and that poor Treby had took his life.

After dark we went over — me and two other men and the doctor. For I went to him first, and he was greatly interested and glad to come. A cart we borrowed at Treholne Farm, up top of the hill, and Farmer Northey came along with us. Then we got to the place — under the hunter's moon, it was, and very near so light as day.

And there was the poor chap, who'd risen to the surface in the course of nature, and without any great trouble we flung a rope over him and fetched him in. 'Twas Ned, sure enough, and his dead eyes were more at peace and his white face better content than ever I'd seen 'em while he lived.

We got him back, and took him to the shed where Dr. Mason kept his motor-car. And there we left him for the doctor to make his examination. Then I went off to report the news of the find, and I was writing my notes to headquarters and the coroner when Dr. Mason

came round. 'Twas very near one o'clock in the morning, and I'd just done my job. And doctor appeared to be more excited than he'd been yet, and puffed at his pipe like a furnace.

"Don't be in no hurry, Lobb," he said. "There's more in this business than you thought."

"No, there ain't, sir," I answered. "I always foretold the man had committed suicide, or met with an accident, and so it has fallen out."

"Depends what you call an accident," he answered. "If to be murdered is to meet with an accident, then you're right."

"Murdered, doctor!" I cried out.

And with that he brought a pill-box from his pocket.

"Ned Treby wasn't drowned," he said. "He was shot through the heart, and that's the bullet that shot him. You'd better take charge of it."

He gave me a small, round bullet — revolver size.

IV

I doubt not many men would have got terrible excited before such a come-along-of-it — but I can say that I didn't turn a hair. There's an instinct in policemen to doubt the opinion of everybody else at a crisis, for bitter experience shows 'em how mistaken people usually are when anything out of the common happens. So my first feeling was that I might be right after all, and that 'twas no murder yet.

We kept it quiet for the moment, to give me time

to ask some questions, and at cocklight next day I went to poor Mrs. Treby and broke the sad news. Touching the bullet in Ned's heart I said nought, however, but I had a talk with the family, and inquired in a general way if he'd got firearms, or was known to have a revolver, or pistol, or any such thing.

"Never," said his mother; "he hated any sudden noise like that, and often asked Jack Tonkin how he could be such a shotsman as he was. For Tonkin's always firing at something, if it's only at the small birds, and often he'd blaze away in his garden suddenly, and Ned used to jump and cuss him when he did."

I knew, of course, that Tonkin was a famous shotsman with firearms for all occasions, but I little liked to hear it now. In fact, a dark fear was growing in my mind, and I had hoped that my visit to the Trebys might bring that fear to nought. Far from it, however, and I found my manhood shrink from what my duty now demanded. That was to call in on Tonkin before he went to work, and also before he knew we'd found the dead man in the water.

Both he and Philippa had taken the disappearance of Ned in a very thankful spirit, and neither pretended they were sorry he'd gone. And neither knew anything whatever about him, though I'd questioned 'em pretty close, and now, in the early morning after the find, it was certain that Tonkin hadn't heard about it yet, though he would know as soon as he got to the quarries.

He was having his breakfast when I called at six o'clock, and I went in hope that my gathering fears

against him might prove vain. But I came away with them sadly increased, and faced with the most painful task my business had ever set me.

You might say I was astonished at my own cleverness that morning, and I'm very sure all Scotland Yard couldn't have gone to work more skilful with Tonkin. Nor yet half so witty as me, for that matter, because I knew the man and his ways, and was able to put all manner of natural questions without wakening his suspicions.

At first I had to give a reason for coming.

"Morning, Jack!" I said. "I wanted to catch you afore you went to work, if I could. And I'm wishful to borrow your revolver and a handful of cartridges, if I may. My service revolver's out of order, and I'm giving a lesson to the constables in the use of small arms, so you'll be doing me a service if you can lend the machine to me."

"Willingly!" he said.

"And you'll be crowning your kindness if you come round yourself one evening," I added. "A tip or two from you would be a godsend to the men, for you're the best revolver shot in the county — so they say."

He was pleased at that, and we talked a bit, and he touched on Ned Treby, and said how oft, in their friendly days, Ned had wondered at Jack's love for firearms and his sporting passion for slaying all furred and feathered creatures.

"A curious man he was," declared Tonkin; "I'd give a month's screw to know what he's done with hisself."

"I wonder if fear of you helped to send him off?"

I said, in a casual sort of voice. "Sometimes I've thought the warnings you gave out and the threatenings and slaughters you breathed against him got on his nerves at last, and made him cut and run for fear of trouble."

But Tonkin laughed at that.

"He was going to do quite as awful things to me as I was to him, for that matter," he said. "But he didn't fright me and I didn't fright him. He frighted my girl, however, and 'twas that kept my anger hot against the man. He was a beastly coward — cunning as a snake at meeting Philippa, and he so worked on her that latterly she was almost afraid to be alone after dark. She even wanted me to take my revolver sometimes, for fear he might lie in wait to do us a mischief."

"But you never did, I should hope?" I said.

"Not me! I never feared him, and at worst he wasn't so mad as to have done anything like that, poor devil. But he's spoiled a good deal of my courting, I may tell you, and since the night he disappeared Philippa Bunt won't go out after dark. She's got a creepy feeling he's not far off, but just hid like a tiger near at hand, and only waiting his time to spring. The very night he went she was in great fear, and that for no apparent reason. We met at Dead Horse Hole — you know — a wisht place, but not if you've got the company of your girl. And she was all nerves, poor toad. She'd come up from her cousin's house at Trebarwith, and I was waiting for her at the Hole; and even with my arm round her she wouldn't stop there. An owl hooted from the woods, and Philippa very near

fainted. We've never been there again. She couldn't explain it, neither, but just said she'd got a sudden chill of fear into her bones. And yet she'd never known the meaning of fear till then, and had been up past that place a score of times after dark. That was before we knew Ned was missing, too."

"Some folks have got a second sense," I told Tonkin. "They can't explain it, nor yet put a name to it, but they've got it. They'll see things we common men can't see, and feel far more than we can feel. No doubt she's got that gift, and had a foretoken of coming ill."

We talked a little longer, and my heart was heavy as lead, and yet I hoped against hope that what looked so black might prove to have no bottom.

"I'll keep you no more. Give me the revolver and I'll be off," I said.

Whereupon Tonkin rose from his meal and went over to a chest of drawers — one of them bureaus with brass handles of old-fashioned make — a terrible ancient thing, in fact, and said to be worth money, though none had ever offered Tonkin money for it. He pulled open the bottom drawer and put in his hand, expecting apparently to find the weapon. But it weren't there, and he frowned and looked puzzled.

"Who the mischief —" he began; and then he broke off. "I swear it was there a week ago," he said, "for I had it out, and was blazing away to keep my hand in at some of those little paper targets."

"Lots of ammunition, anyway," I said, for the drawer was half full.

He thought a minute, with his lips pursed up hard.

"Have any one borrowed it?" I asked; but he shook his head.

"It may be in the pocket of a coat overstairs, and that's the only place it can be," he answered; "and if not there, then heaven knows where it is."

He went to seek it; and his aunt, with whom he lived, talked to me. But afore that, and unseen by her, I'd put a couple of cartridges in my pocket. For that was all I wanted, and as valuable to me as the revolver itself. Of course, Master Jack didn't find his weapon, and I reckoned at that moment I knew as well as he knew where it lay, and that was at the bottom of Dead Horse Hole.

He came down house in three minutes, bothered-like; and I took my leave and said it didn't matter, and that I hoped he'd find it, because such a thing was worth money, and might also be a danger in unskilled hands.

He was perfectly frank and open throughout this talk, and never betrayed by a look, or a change of colour, or a falter of voice, that he was fretted, or that I had took him on to dangerous ground. Yet, so far as I could see, thus far he'd woven a good strand of rope for his own neck, for he admitted without a thought that he'd been at Dead Horse Hole on the night of Treby's disappearance, before his girl came to him, and he admitted that his revolver was gone from its place.

Half an hour later I'd proved the bullet that killed Ned was the same bore as those in Jack's revolver, and I felt that on such circumstantial evidence there was only one thing left to do. Which I did do. I went up over to Mr. Mark Fox, who was in residence at the

time and a Justice of the Peace, and I got a warrant for Tonkin's arrest, and took him at his own home in the dinner-hour. I dare say some officers would have arrested him at his work, afore the whole five hundred men and boys in St. Tid's quarries, but I couldn't do that. I just popped in while the village was indoors at dinner, and he went over all dazed and came away as quiet as a lamb, and few knew till nightfall that he was locked up.

The same evening, when, of course, the murder was out, young Philippa ran into the police-station, fairly tearing her hair, and demanding to be locked up also. She said she'd been along with Jack that night, and must share what danger and blame attached to him. But I calmed her down and sent her home. I'd got my ideas about her, you may be sure, by now; but she wasn't going to run away, and I felt for the minute that she might be safer loose than locked up. I'd have staked my life she knew something, but I couldn't yet be sure how much she knew, or how deep she was in it herself.

V

Jack vowed he was innocent, and most people believed him, despite the evidence. Anyway, the coroner's jury brought it in "Murder by person or persons unknown," and Tonkin was committed to the assizes at Bodmin. Meantime there came an order from the Home Office to pump out Dead Horse Hole, and it was done at the cost of thirty-three pounds to the State. And, sure enough, Jack's revolver, loaded but with one barrel

fired, came to light at the bottom. But nothing else of any account turned up, save the bones of a sheep. There'd always been a story in St. Tid that there was some huge fish in the hole, but there were not.

When the case against Tonkin was prepared, we had evidence all pointing one way, while his character and record and family history all pointed the other. On the one side was Ned Treby in his grave, and the fact that Jack had been heard to threaten him, and the fact that Jack's revolver had done the fatal deed, and the fact that Tonkin had admitted being beside Dead Horse Hole on the very night that Treby lost his life. And against that we had his fame as a good sportsman, and a good chapel member, and a steady and honest worker at the quarries. As for Philippa, it seemed pretty clear she had no hand in it, after all, for it couldn't be proved what she knew and what she didn't. We knew when she left her cousin at Trebarwith on the fatal night, and when she got home to her grandfather, and between those times she had met Jack by the pool, according to appointment. What she said was that she felt creepy and down-daunted on the night in question, and had made Jack come away from the pool because an old owl was hooting there, and she couldn't stand it no more, even with him beside her. She swore they weren't there ten minutes before they came away, and that they saw no sign of anybody there.

'Twas nothing but surprises to the end, and in the sequel the most amazing thing of all happened in the court-house to Bodmin, after Tonkin was convicted. For, in due course, the judge and jury, as didn't know

anything about Jack's private character, took the face value of the facts, and no doubt asked themselves very naturally that if Tonkin hadn't shot Treby, who had? 'Tis true that Jack's lawyer showed Ned might have gone into Jack's house easily and got the revolver out of his drawer, and none be the wiser, and that he might have shot himself in such a way as to make it seem that Jack had done it; but a jury of common-sense men reckoned that idea was too far-fetched altogether, and so they brought in Tonkin guilty, with a strong recommendation to mercy. And the judge had said that the recommendation should go to the proper quarter, and he had gone so far as to pick up the black cap as a dreadful first step to the death sentence, when the court was flung upside down and everybody thrown into a proper tantara.

For who should jump up in the well of the court but young Arthur Treby! So wild as a hawk the youth looked, and he shouted:

"I must be heard, your Honour! 'Tis all wrong; Jack never done it, and he mustn't swing for it!"

Well, you may guess what a business it was after that, and, in all my experience, I never saw no such scene in a court of law before or since. There was the judge, calm and patient, and his pulse not going a beat quicker, and the lawyers all on end, and the jury staring at the boy, and the people humming like a hive of hornets, and young Arthur, white to his eyes, standing panting in the midst.

"Who are you?" asked the judge, when the clerk had quelled the people.

"The brother of the dead man, your Honour."

"Why didn't you come forward before if you knew anything about this?"

"I'd ordained to say nought if Tonkin got off, but seeing you be intent to hang him, I must speak."

'Twas very irregular, of course, but no man utters sentence of death against his fellow-man if he can avoid it in a Christian land. His lordship considered for a bit, then he bade young Arthur go up in the witness-box.

"If, however, you would rather speak in private to me, you may do so," said the judge.

But Arthur weren't feared of the people, and he went in the box gladly and told his tale in scraps and bits. But it hung together, and had the solemn stamp of truth upon it, and the upshot of his speech was this.

On the day before Ned's death, Arthur surprised him with Tonkin's revolver. 'Twas clear he'd gone in at a time when Jack's house-place was empty, and had taken the revolver out of the drawer. He'd been very wild and strange for a good bit, and Arthur strove with him and begged him to give up the weapon, fearing he meant to kill himself. On that Ned had said to him that 'twasn't for himself he'd borrowed it.

"Don't you fear I'm going to shoot myself," he said to his brother, "but 'tis that blackguard thief and that foul girl I be going to shoot! They shan't live a day longer. Tomorrow night they meet, where I know, and they'll meet for the last time, so sure as I'm a living man! And if you whisper a word you'll die, too!"

That was the awful fix young Arthur found himself

in, and, instead of running to me while there was time, he hoped his brother was only talking nonsense to fright him; and, for Ned's credit and the family name, he kept silent and took the matter into his own weak hands. He tried next day to get Ned into another frame of mind, and he swore to the judge that he never lost sight of his brother through that day, and went on his knees to him to give up the revolver and forget the awful things that he planned to do. And at last Ned turned on him, and said that if he named the matter again, he'd put daylight into him also. And Arthur feared that he'd took leave of his senses. So when, after their evening meal, Arthur was just going into Tonkin's house to give up his fearful secret and warn him to keep at home, then, in the very same minute, his brother went forth and sped up the village. The boy found Jack was out, too, and guessing that Ned was going to his black work, he ran after him and kept him in sight.

Arthur couldn't tell the judge how his brother had got to know that Jack and Philippa were to meet that night by Dead Horse Hole, but evidently the man did know, for there he went, with Arthur behind him. The younger stole along over the stiles and down the field paths, and finally saw Ned go in the bushes by the pool and lie in wait there. And then Arthur guessed the lovers would come along pretty soon to their doom, and he swore that this is what happened.

It was borne in upon him that the revolver was the vital thing, and that bloodshed might yet be saved and his brother preserved from murder and the man and the girl from death if he could but get the weapon away

from Ned. He was very near so big and strong as the other, and it entered his mind that by a sudden dash he might do the trick and wrench the revolver away. Once it was in his hands, the other would be harmless and powerless to commit his crime, and Arthur would save 'em all.

So the brave young fellow came sauntering along, and pretended to be terrible surprised to see Ned; and all of a sudden, before Treby guessed what he was up to, he closed with him and grabbed for the revolver. They fought for half a minute like two wild cats, and then, with all their four hands on the revolver, the thing went off, and there was only one man there. For Ned got shot through his heart, and standing where they did, on the brink of the hole, he fell back and fell in. The poor boy, shocked out of his life very near, climbed down to the water's edge as close as he dared, but the face of the pool was soon still. His brother had sunk, so Arthur knew he must certainly be dead. He poked about as well as he could, and very near fell in himself; and then, just after he'd crawled up again, and was sitting shivering above and calling on God to help him, he heard Jack Tonkin whistling a merry tune as he came along, and he got in among the bushes and bided there till Philippa had come. He testified they stopped but a short time, and soon went away together. Then he got home, and went to bed, and he kept his fearful secret, and never opened his mouth again till Jack Tonkin was going to be sentenced to death.

Of course, one could see where the lad went wrong, and the terrible mistakes he made, and all he ought to

have done; but that's what he had done, according to his youth and ignorance, and his story was generally taken for truth.

The court rose after Arthur's tale, and he was kept in custody and locked up till the next day. And then Tonkin and him were both brought up again and set free, and the hidden ways of God made clear to man for once. Because nobody could declare but what the right thing hadn't happened, and not a law was broken, you might say, which is always a great satisfaction to the well-trained human conscience. For Ned hadn't committed suicide, and he hadn't committed murder, and the lovers were proved innocent without a stain on their characters; and Arthur, poor lad, had done what he thought to be right, and, in fact, was a hero to some people.

As for the dead man, he'd merely met with a fatal accident, as a result of probably falling weak in his head; and, anyway, he'd gone to a world where his frantic thoughts and intentions would be understood, and where the faulty blood in his veins would no doubt be taken into account to lessen his sin and sentence. For I'm very sure, and so's my wife, that though little care is given to a man's father and grandfather when he comes before the majesty of the law, yet such things carry their value afore the Throne of Grace, and crimes are weighed up aloft in nicer scales than human justice knows, even at County Assizes. For the All-seeing Eye will look deeper than human evidence, and not only search the secrets of men's hearts, but the blood that beats in 'em.

"THE GREEN MAN" AND "THE TIGER"

Considering how wonderful few public-houses we could number at St. Tid, it seemed a curious thing that two of 'em should stand exactly opposite each other; but so they did, and as Quarry Lane, where they happened to be, was a narrow sort of street, their signs very near made an arch over the heads of the passers-by and there wasn't six feet of room between 'em. And one was "The Tiger" and the other was "The Green Man"; and as a green man be a gamekeeper, it seemed as if the hunter on one sign was after the beast of prey on the other. The same sign-writer had done both, and still they swayed when the wind blew north and found Quarry Lane; but they'd gone pretty dark from age, and you couldn't see much of the green man but his face, which was a shade lighter than the rest; while as for the tiger, you might mark his yellow stripes if you knew where to look for him, but the rest of him was pretty well gone with grime and blackness.

Indeed, the master at "The Green Man" and the misses at "The Tiger" were quite agreed they must have their signs painted again when one clever enough to do it should come along, though, as Matthew Polwarn truly said, neither his house nor Mrs. Nute's wanted advertisement, for both was well enough known by the high character of its refreshment and the good

quality of its company. There was no rivalry but quite the opposite, for Nancy Nute's husband had been a life-long friend to Polwarn, and he wore black for him when he died; while as for Nancy herself, it was believed she was a sort of relation of Polwarn's, because before marriage she'd been a Trecarrow, and everybody knows that Trecarrows and Polwarns were always related somehow, if you could trace 'em far enough back.

Near of an age they must have been, and Matt was on the sixty mark, or thereabout, and Nancy Nute might have been a year or two more, though on her good days she'd often seem to be a bit less. They was both very well thought of, though I never heard that anybody set a higher value on them than they did themselves; but they had a right to be satisfied, for they prospered and won credit for honesty and good will and good sense.

And each inn boasted its own strong point. "The Tiger" was famed for a very fine garden full of flowers, with such hollyhocks as are seldom seen in the border, and a mulberry tree, which is a very rare fruit-bearer in Cornwall, and a fine swing for the children. Because for ninepence at "The Tiger" you could get a tea with cream and jam and cake; and in summer time, when holiday folk was about pleasuring at Trebarwith Strand and Tintagel and so on, scores of dozens would come to tea at Mrs. Nute's, and no man, woman or child was ever heard to grumble at what she gave them. Then, over the way, "The Green Man" was popular for sterner victuals, and men favoured it and travellers could be put up there and their horses and traps like-

wise. Matthew Polwarn had a wonderful stable-yard and a wonderful stable-boy in the shape of old Billy Inch. And behind the house there was a garden, too — not such a beautiful place as Mrs. Nute's pleasure garden; but good potato ground and famous for its small fruits. In fact Polwarn's "Golden Drop" gooseberries often took a prize at the flower show, and his black currants did amazing well also.

A very busy, prosperous pair you might say, and each thought highly of the other, and the man never hesitated to praise the woman openly, and the woman couldn't say enough friendly things of the man. They played into each other's hands in a manner of speaking, and when customers came to Nancy who seemed better like to be suited by Matthew, to him she sent 'em; while when folk trailed into "The Green Man" for tea and light refreshments in general, Matthew would often bring 'em across the road to "The Tiger," and explain that they'd be a lot happier in Nancy's garden than his bar parlour.

So it stood, when disquieting things fell out, and though you'd have thought no power was ever hatched to make them two people uneasy, or shake 'em from their busy and bustling existence, yet it so happened, and owing to a very honest, well-meaning and respectable third person, the spirit of adventure woke betwixt Matt and Nancy and thoughts came into their heads that otherwise would never have found room there. Nor was it rivalry, nor envy, nor any distracting evil of that sort, but quite the contrary. The new ideas ran upon very different lines and pointed to a great

increase of friendship. And, of course, the only great increase of friendship possible in a Christian land between a bachelor man and a widow must lead to matrimony. But certain it is that neither Matthew nor yet Mrs. Nute would ever have let their minds dwell upon such a sensational idea if chance and the behaviour of a third party had not opened the way to it.

It was Bartholomew Keat who, all unguessing, wrought the change. He'd been potman at "The Tiger" for twenty-five solid years and served Nancy's husband most faithful, and continued so to serve her when her husband died. A clean-shaved, quiet man, with wonderful nice manners and a kind face and grey eyes, as small as they were sensible. A man of great good sense and religion also; and though accident had made him a potman, he was teetotal himself and had never touched a drop of liquor in his life. So quiet and regular was he that he was undervalued if anything, and Nancy always said that she never knew what "The Tiger" would be without him till it happened his uncle died up the country and Bart asked for leave and was away a week burying the man and settling his affairs.

They say his mistress very near kissed him when he came back and weren't ashamed to tell him she had missed him at every turn.

"I never did understand all you mean, Bart," she said, for a franker creature you couldn't meet. "You was in my mind every minute of the day and when it come to night, and I had to do the fifty thousand things you do, I began to see what there is to you. And this

I'll say, you haven't been getting enough money along with me, and you'll have to get more."

He didn't expect nothing like that, and his face flickered up a bit, for he'd sooner have had a word of praise from Mrs. Nute than anybody alive. They was very friendly and familiar and really fond of each other; and he knew how much, but she didn't. In fact, as it came out after, Bart had often dreamed dreams about Nancy and wondered if they would ever come together. And he confessed to her when the murder was out, that his ambition had risen by night to the highest flights; but by day, when he stood before her once more, his hopes would sink again and he'd wonder how he dared, even under cover of darkness, to harbour such high resolves. In a word he loved her, and there's no doubt that Nancy was very much attached to him and put great faith in him; but along of his being so quiet and modest and regular, she'd never thought of him as anything different from her potman and right-hand man. Then came his holiday and she found, much to her surprise, what a big part of the machine Bart had become; but though she was frank enough to say how she'd missed him, she couldn't go farther and confess that it weren't only for what he did, but also for what he was. But Keat's uncle, now gone to rest, had left him two hundred pounds a year for evermore; and even such a shy and humble bird as Bart felt that the case was altered and with that dollop of money behind him the manly thing to do would be to have a dash.

It took him a bit of time to come to the scratch even then; but at last he spoke and did it in his usual gentle

way. She knew by many signs how terrible much in earnest he was, and she felt more than a thought drawn to him and understood very well what a capital and trustworthy husband the man would make for her autumn time. Yet her pride couldn't quite see her marrying her potman. She was a woman and had a female bent of mind about things, and so she didn't say "No" and didn't say "Yes," but thanked him for offering and said she'd think it over. Whatever she said must mean a great change, and for a time it looked the least of evils to keep Keat by marrying him; for, of course, if she said "No" to the man, it was clear he couldn't be her right hand no more, but must leave the inn. And her heart sank at the thought of another potman at her age.

She asked for a week to consider it and one fine day, unbeknown'st to Bart, slipped over to have a tell along with Matthew.

"Bartholomew Keat wants to marry me," she said, "and what d'you think of it?"

Well, the natural instinct at such times is to advise against. I don't know for why, but when man or woman asks a fellow creature as to the wisdom of wedding, they'll always pull a long face and find fifty reasons why not. And as Matthew took the common view of Bart Keat and undervalued him a lot, just because he did his work so perfect that nobody ever noticed it, he advised Nancy to put the idea from her and turn the man down.

"Good powers!" says Matthew Polwarn. "A simple, everyday chap like him to offer for you! He must

have a cheerful conceit of himself! And for my part I should look to see people of much greater importance offering for you; and, anyway, why can't you bide as you are? Look at me, I'm right enough unmarried, and with all you can say for the state, one thing you can always say against it, and that is it's not good for business."

There was no argument against Keat in that, of course, and, being a bachelor, Matthew's opinion didn't carry much weight with Mrs. Nute, though she greatly respected his judgment on general questions; but he didn't leave it there, for it was clear she had put a lot of new ideas into his napper-case by her question, and that very same evening he walked into her house and sat in her garden along with her for full twenty minutes. And the sum of what he said was to ask her not to decide about Keat till he'd seen her again.

For, to be frank, the sudden reminder that Nancy Nute was a comely and a marriageable woman had acted in a very surprising manner on the mind of Matthew Polwarn, and though until then the notion of offering his heart and hand had never occurred to him, when suddenly faced with the thought of Nancy married to somebody else, he found the idea exceeding unpleasant. In fact it made him troubled, and so he got to Mrs. Nute again and wouldn't let her do anything definite about Bart until she'd given Matthew himself time to turn over the unexpected problem.

Which he did do, and after a lot of thinking, he came to the startling conclusion that he could do with Nancy himself; and the more he thought upon her, the more

he grew to feel that nobody else must have her but him. And then he began to want her and grew more and more fierce for her, so that the next time they met, the poor potman weren't so much as mentioned, and Matthew fairly swept Nancy off her feet.

"Since you think of getting married, then it's time I stirred myself," began Mr. Polwarn, "and as I ain't going to have you marrying any Dick, Tom, or Harry that be daring enough to lift his eyes to you and cheeky enough to offer, I must do it myself. And when I come to think of the great feeling I have towards you, Nancy, and the great admiration I've always felt for your judgment and good sense and fine appearance, the wonder is I've held off all these years and never asked you to take me. But one good result is that no time need to be wasted. We know each other well and haven't no secret from each other and have been good friends for a quarter of a century, so there it is. And if you've got half the opinion of me that I've got of you, then without a doubt you'll thank your God to hear what I'm saying and answer according."

He put it like that in his downright way and he wouldn't let Nancy turn it over in her mind and give him his answer later. In fact, when she suggested so doing, he was a good deal hurt and gave it as his opinion that any hesitation was a reflection on him.

"'Tis no case for beating about the bush," he said, "and you're not the woman I take you for if you can't make up your mind in a big thing as quick as you can in a small one. Keat was different. You had to let him down by degrees and so soften the blow; but in

my case things have long been between us of a very delicate and tender nature, even though we didn't know it, and looking back I see amazing clear that we were made for each other from the beginning and only failed to find it out along of being so busy and hard-working. In fact, I ain't going to take 'No' for an answer, Nancy, so you'll be wasting your wind to say it. I haven't waited sixty years to hear a negative from a female when I came to offer for her, and you know as well as I do that we should be exceeding happy together and you'd only be a thought less fortunate than myself if you took me."

He rattled on, and Nancy, who was a mighty lot flattered by the offer, felt her strength of will fairly oozing out of her before him. And indeed she couldn't see any reason against it for that matter. She liked and respected the man; she approved of his forceful ways; and she didn't see any reason why she shouldn't love him if he invited her so to do.

She begged, however, rather feeble like, for time; but that was just what he wouldn't give her, and so it came about, most strangely I'm sure, that within less than a week of Bart Keat's offer of marriage, Mrs. Nute was tokened to Matthew.

And in sober honesty she had to confess to her friends that if it hadn't been for Bart's proposal she never would have had Matthew's.

And Matthew didn't deny it.

"The Lord often chooses a fool to light the road of the wise," he declared, "and I shall always feel kindly to your potman for showing me my duty. Not that

Bart's a fool by any means, for a more self-respecting man you won't find. But he don't move on our level and I'm sure, though it was put into him by Providence to offer for you, he was only used as a humble tool to lift you to higher things."

That's what Matthew said, and without a doubt that's what he believed.

But 'tis certain Nancy had her nice feelings like another, and when Bart came to hear his fate, she did suffer above a bit when she broke to the man that she'd taken somebody else.

"But you must understand this, Bart," she said, "if it had been any lesser man than Mr. Polwarn, I wouldn't have taken him. I think a very great deal of you and, for your comfort, I don't mind confessing that I was much inclined towards you; but when Matthew offered — well, you're among the clever ones and I'm sure you'd be the last to put yourself up against a man of his position and fame. Besides which, he was my husband's life-long friend. And though it might seem strange to some people, I feel pretty sure that it won't seem strange to you."

Well, Bart took it lying down, as we say, and whether it was true he was among the clever ones and looked on to the end from the beginning, or simply happened to be the meek and mild sort that are born for other folk to clean their boots upon, I can't say. Anyway he heard the widow and confessed frankly that he couldn't stand up against such a rival as Matthew.

"All I can say is that since it had to be, I wish he'd offered sooner and not led me into this terrible mis-

fortune," said Bart, looking very long in the jaw. "Of course him and me aren't in the same street, Nancy, and I wouldn't pretend it, for none would be deceived if I did. But I tell you again it is very unfortunate he left it till I'd been tempted to offer. For if he'd spoke first, I'd have held my peace and gone on my way and stopped here; but now it's all over and the course of my life is changed and I shall leave St. Tid, though where else a person could live comfortably, God knows."

"Don't you leave, my dear man," urged Nancy, glad enough he'd took it so gentle and never liking him better than at that moment. "St. Tid wouldn't be St. Tid without you and you've always been a true and valued friend to me and a helpful and sensible creature, and always will be. And, between us, I don't see no reason at all why you shouldn't go on as my potman. I'll even go further than that and say I don't see why you shouldn't marry a nice woman yourself and bring her here, if you've got a mind to it."

"There's only one for me in this world," declared poor Bart. "There never was but one woman for me and never will be; and as to stopping here, I might or I might not, for I've always had my feelings under very nice control and never let you see by a word or a sigh what I had in my mind. But you won't be here yourself much longer and I certainly don't serve in 'The Tiger' under any other but you. In fact," said Bart, "the pub could only be a deserted wilderness without you to my way of feeling."

It would have been a very cunning speech in any man

but Bart; but, of course, a simple soul like him meant nothing by it.

Anyway, he'd given her something to think over, and her face grew troubled and she looked into his little eyes with a frown.

"Me gone!" she said. "What d'you mean? Me leave this house after thirty-four years?"

"No doubt your first would turn in his grave if you did," admitted Bart, sad like; "but what about it? When you're mistress of 'The Green Man'— well, then you're mistress of 'The Green Man'; and you can't be in two places at once, clever as you are."

She didn't say no more, but he'd shook her, though no doubt he didn't know it. As a fact, that side of the future hadn't struck on Nancy. She was so excited at the change and the prospects of being wife of Matthew, that she'd forgot a good bit what it meant, and though there was the splendour of being his wife and so on, yet against that rose the harsh certainty that she'd have to play second for the rest of her life, instead of being first. And somehow she'd always regarded "The Tiger" as being rather a higher-class establishment than "The Green Man," along of the tea-garden and pleasure ground. And now, turning it over she began to feel pretty certain that Matthew wouldn't be of her opinion on that subject.

When she had got so far, Bart poked his head into her little private room.

He'd only come for a bunch of keys, which she gave him; but before he went out again, he let drop one very telling remark. It didn't seem to have much bearing

on what they'd been talking about, and yet, if Bart hadn't been such a simple man, you'd have thought he knew exactly what was in her mind at that minute.

All he said was, "You can't have anything for nothing, Nancy — not in this weary world." Then he disappeared.

Well, doubt in a situation of this sort seemed more than Mrs. Nute was built to endure, and the same evening, when Matthew dropped in for half an hour to do his bit of courting, she came to it. She weren't too hopeful naturally and she knew he must have his way in the end; but she fell back upon a bit of bluff, as women will when they're up against a difficult position. In her heart, being a very reasonable and sensible creature, she knew the game was up so far as "The Tiger" was concerned, because you can't eat your cake and have it both; and it was very clear she couldn't be Mr. Polwarn's partner and reign on her own also; but she put out a feeler, though at the same time quite ready to climb down. However, the world is full of surprises, and you never know when you begin talking where the gift of speech will land you. There's a sort of people who only like to talk for the sake of argument and if you say twice two is four they won't let it rest at that; and there's another sort of people who can't keep their eyes on a conversation and their own temper at the same time, and that sort think if you don't agree with them, you mean to quarrel. In fact the art of conversation isn't given to all and the spirit of fair give and take in that matter is much rarer than we humans would like to believe, or than it ought to be.

"I be looking on ahead a good bit, my dear," began Nancy. "This is a great upheaval at my time of life, and I'm wondering all manner of things. Will you be so happy and comfortable along with me as what you are over there at 'The Green Man'? You must put that to yourself, Matthew."

That was her bluff, you see — an innocent thing enough — and if he'd seen through it, and just laughed, and answered as a loving heart in a male bosom ought, no harm could have happened; but Matt, with all his virtues, hadn't much sense of fun, nor yet knowledge of women. So, by way of reply, he jumped as if he'd sat down on a wasp and snorted in what you might call a very contemptuous fashion.

"Woman comes to man, I believe, not man to woman," he said.

"That is so, but you must think all round it," she answered, with a touch of colour, for she didn't like his contempt.

He laughed now, but it was in the wrong place, so that didn't please her neither.

"Where's the fun?" she asked. "I thought, of course, that you'd be business-like as well as lover-like and see 'The Green Man' had got less to it and was less every way than 'The Tiger.'"

She oughtn't to have said it, but she did.

"You thought that, Nancy?" he asked, too astonished for the minute to be vexed. "'The Green Man' less to it than 'The Tiger'?"

"Surely."

"Because you get a few tea-parties at ninepence a head on your little bit of grass?"

Well, that meant the gloves off, of course.

"What might you mean by my 'little bit of grass' then? Not the best garden in St. Tid, I suppose?"

"Be damned!" he said. "If this ain't the funniest thing I've ever heard."

"You never was one to see a joke," she answered, "and if that's the funniest thing you ever heard, you ain't heard many. And you'll forgive me, Matthew, if I say there's nothing funny in me speaking about my garden, though it do sound funny to hear it called 'a bit of grass' by a man that's got nothing but a few apple trees past bearing and a strip of potatoes and weeds and a fowl run. But as you've got no use for a garden, perhaps you'll remember the inn yard and how many hosses you can put up, and how many I can."

"It's the number of hosses that come, not the number that you put up," he answered. "My inn yard — so terrible small no doubt to your eye — can yet hold half a dozen vehicles; and you'll generally find 'em there, and the hosses in the stalls."

"Half a dozen! You know better, Matthew. 'Twould puzzle you to get in four market carts. And how many times have you led 'em into my yard — and never thanked me neither?"

Mr. Polwarn was getting up his steam by now and Mrs. Nute was losing her temper.

He dropped the market carts and came to the point.

"And did you really think I was going to chuck

'The Green Man' and coming over to your shop? Did you really think that, Nancy? That's the point for the minute."

She never had, of course; but she weren't going to say so now. She'd rather have died on the spot than throw up the sponge after what he'd said.

"You've often told me I was the sensiblest she you ever met with, Matthew, and being so, I naturally thought you'd drop your bar-loafer's place and come over to me — and glad to come."

"Good God!" said Mr. Polwarn, and stared at her as if she was a spider dropped in his glass of beer.

I think Mrs. Nute felt that was about the limit, and she'd said enough, if not too much. Anyway she began to make peace from that point; though it weren't too easy. But women often have more sense of propriety in a row than what men have; and after they've got in a fatal thrust, they'll soften — especially if they think they've won the battle and come out victorious.

"I'm sorry," said Nancy. "'Tis a shame upon us — two old people with some credit for sense — to be dressing one another down like this. I'm sorry, Matthew, if I've hurt your feelings; but 'tis your fault, for you didn't ought to have scoffed at my garden and called it a patch of grass. It may seem nought to you; but it's a lot to me — my life-blood, you might say."

"You needn't apologise now," he answered. "You've opened my eyes — right or wrong. 'A bar-loafer's place' is 'The Green Man.' Well, well! No

wonder you thought I'd come and live along with you."

"I didn't really," she confessed. "I knew very well you wouldn't; but I had to say it. And if I'd remembered that a joke was nought to you, I might have thought twice."

"I laughed, however," he said.

"Yes; you laughed. And a proper blood-curdling laugh it was."

Then Mr. Polwarn got up to take his leave.

"Well, that lets me out," he replied to her. "We'd better turn this over in a prayerful spirit; and since you've told me you're sorry for what you said, I won't be behind you and I'll say that I'm sorry for what I said — though it was whips to your scorpions."

"We'll meet again in a week," said Nancy.

"I was going to say a fortnight," he answered, and her lips tightened and her eyes grew hard.

"Make it a month," she suggested.

Then he began to feel he was overdoing his indifference; but he didn't mean to eat no more humble pie for Nancy that evening, and so he agreed they'd take a month to think on it.

"And one point we'd better have clear," he said. "If you marry me, you come to 'The Green Man.' That's my last word on that subject."

"I'll bear it in mind, Matthew."

"Bar-loafers or no bar-loafers."

"Just so. Nothing could be clearer, I'm sure."

They didn't take an affectionate leave of each other, and there's no doubt their hearts were very full about

it. 'Twas six of her and half a dozen of him, I reckon, and both knew they'd been wrong; but each blamed the other most.

Matthew kept his mouth shut on his trouble, for he was a proud man and he'd have suffered much rather than confess he'd made any mistake in his judgment of Mrs. Nute; but she wasn't proud; and she'd got Bart, of course, to listen to her adventures, and he had the art to say the word in season and calm her down.

He heard the tale, and to Nancy's credit there's no doubt he heard it truthfully told; for she didn't exaggerate, and she didn't hide her part in the argument; but Mr. Keat entirely supported her and said that, in his opinion, such a self-respecting woman could have done and said no less. He declared that Matthew had brought this disaster upon himself; and he feared that his action and impatience showed a very poor understanding of female nature in general and Nancy's in particular.

"It isn't as if you was a difficult and notorious sort of woman," explained Bart; "for then the man might have sympathy; but for a man to misunderstand you is to give himself away and show he's got but a low order of brain; because you always speak clearly and you're always honest and straight, and your word is as good as your bond. And, for my part, I don't see at all that it was an unfair thing to do to ask him to come and live with you, considering what a remarkable house this is. And you've got a perfect right to consider 'The Green Man' a lower-class public than 'The Tiger,' and to speak of your renowned garden as 'a

patch of grass' was very far from a gentlemanly thing and, if it weren't such a wicked falsehood, you might laugh at such jealousy. For jealousy no doubt it is back of it."

In this way Bart soothed Mrs. Nute, and, for such an ordinary man, his choice of words was worthy of all praise. She went so far as to ask Bart if he'd speak to Matthew for her; but he didn't see his way to that.

"No," he said; "there's few things I wouldn't do for you, on the earth or on the waters under the earth; but for me to see Mr. Polwarn on such a sacred subject is out of the question. It's far too delicate a matter," Bart told her; "and you must always remember that at the present time I'm suffering myself from great grief and sorrow, because all is lost for me. No," he said, "I'm sure in a calmer moment you'll understand that if there's one man in the world can't go to Matthew and demand reparation on your account, Nancy, I'm that man."

Of course she did see it.

"Be honest," she said. "I think a very great deal of you, and if Matthew dazzled me a bit, Bart, that's only to say I was weak and no discredit to you. And I dare say your calm manner and good temper and so on, would wear better in the long run than his overbearing way and cruel self-conceit. But be honest, do you think 'The Green Man's' a more important and more famous house than what mine is?"

"This house," declared Bart, "have got the natural advantages and Matthew have got the pull in the matter

of capital. My candid opinion is that if 'The Green Man' had a hundred pounds spending on it, and a brave advertisement to the holiday people put in the newspapers now and again, that in six months we shouldn't hear no more about 'The Green Man.' 'Twould as good as vanish off the face of the earth. There's not the exclusiveness, nor yet the class there, and never was; and we all know when gentlefolks come to St. Tid — to see the quarries and what not — which house they bring their custom to."

In another man this would have been craft without a doubt; but in Bart 'twas just an honest opinion, and Nancy found herself entirely of his mind.

"'Tis amazing how we think alike," she told him; and he went on to say that if she hadn't cast his offer aside so quick, he was going to have talked about a bit of outlay on "The Tiger" from his windfall.

"This place be my life in a manner of speaking," he explained. "I feel so much part of it as the front door, Nancy, and my first thought, when uncle died and left me his useful bit of money, was your public. Or should I say it was my second thought, for my first was you, as I've made clear."

"If that man could only be made to see he's wrong about 'The Tiger,'" said Nancy, "I should have a bit more peace of mind. At present he thinks I'm only a silly woman and my goose is a duck; but if he knew a clear-seeing man, like you, felt the same, it might open his eyes."

"It would depend a good deal how we all stood,"

answered Bart. "I'm not clever, but I'm clever enough not to go edging in between husband and wife, as I suppose it will soon be; but if you should reach a point where you can say you're free to the nation once more and not bound to Matthew, then, if you was to give me the right, I'd very soon let him know that there's a gulf fixed between 'The Green Man' and 'The Tiger,' and I'd make the gulf broader in a week."

"I'll turn it over," she promised him, and sure enough she did, and it was less than a month, after all, before she and Matthew met again; for she walked over and spoke with him inside two days. They had a very friendly ten minutes too, for both was on their best behaviour and both a bit ashamed of losing their tempers. And as they'd come to exactly the same conclusion, each was very thankful indeed to hear what the other had got to say.

They parted the best of friends; but they parted, and it was understood that they felt sure they'd be happier and more self-respecting and finer ornaments of society altogether if they didn't wed, but just kept on — good neighbours, as before.

And Nancy took Bart after a decent interval; but the interval was Bart's own idea; and though he hadn't the wit to see how valuable his suggestion really was, it worked out very well indeed for him, because, after six months had passed, Nancy had grown quite cool again, and entirely forgiven Matthew, and no longer felt any wish that Bart should go over and give him a bit of his mind, or anything uncomfortable like that. So

not a cloud was upon the marriage and Mr. Polwarn gave Nancy a nice present of crockery when the time came.

And what's more, after Bart was married, he put twice a hundred pounds into "The Tiger" and also saw he got his money's worth.

You'll not find a happier couple of middle-aged people anywhere; and though now and again I've heard a man say that Bart's not such a meek and mild customer as he seems to be, and Nancy knows it — be sure that's only a little bit of human spite; for there's many people in the world who can't see their neighbours happy and prosperous without wanting to drop vinegar in the oil.

THE LEGACY

'Twas something surprising how interested the Tonkin family got in old Miss Sleep after she had her stroke. Afore that, people always said such a sparse, tough old creature would live to be a hundred and one, if not more; but when, like a bolt from the blue, came her trouble, and she woke up with her left arm dead as a stick and her eyelid down and her speech uncertain, then the Tonkin people were up and at her like a swarm of bees. 'Twas "poor, dear Aunt Sarah," and "that saint of God, Aunt Sarah," and so on; and if chattering and calves' foot jelly could have finished her, out she'd have gone. But she was a proper old bit of Cornish oak, Sarah Sleep was, and, stroke or no stroke, I reckon she saw through Milly Tonkin and Jane and Nettie, her daughters, and likewise Amos and Spry, her sons.

But there was one who didn't see through 'em, naturally enough, and that was Lucinda Parsons. For Lucinda was tokened to Spry Tonkin, and thought the world of him and his mother and his sisters. And she liked old Sarah very well too; but when the sick woman in her thick, broken voice poked fun at Milly Tonkin and her childer, and told Lucinda she knew very well why they was all on the buzz, little Lucinda, who believed every soul on earth to be as simple and straightforward as herself, wouldn't credit it and

assured the ancient woman that nobody could be so mean and hateful as to come fussing round her for what they might get.

"We all know you're a poor woman, because you've said so," declared Lucinda, "and I'm sure, even if they was so evil inclined, your poor sticks wouldn't make 'em pretend they cared about you."

"They think I've got dollops of money," answered Sarah, "and they won't believe the bitter truth, that I lost very near all of it in Carn Brea tin mine years and years agone."

"Of course they believe it, my old dear; for whoever wouldn't believe you?" asked Lucinda.

"Nobody believes nobody," answered Miss Sleep; "and for your own future happiness and peace of mind I wish you wasn't so trustful. And this I'll tell you yet once more: your own young man, Spry Tonkin, is the worst of the lot, and I'd be properly glad if I lived to see you break with him, for then I'd say, 'Lord, let Thy servant depart in peace.'"

"I'm sure you didn't ought to feel such things against him," declared Lucinda, "For he's the straightest man in St. Tid, besides the best-looking; and never was such another."

It stood like this, you see. Lucinda was an orphan and Sarah Sleep, who'd known her people, took Lucinda into her house for a friend and servant when the girl's mother died. And Lucinda got ten pounds a year wages, and Sarah was so fond of her that sharp-eyed people always said she'd leave her all as she'd got to leave. Some declared, as Miss Sleep herself did, that the lot

was nothing but a few bits of worn-out furniture; but others hinted at a useful little stock of money hid in a stocking somewhere. Sarah had been to service with the Trelawnys for fifty year before she came back to her birth-place, and knowing the close, saving sort she was, people guessed that she must have plenty of good money put by, and very like a pension too; but she'd tell some that she'd lost it all in a mine, and she'd tell others that she'd bought an annuity, so it was very vague and uncertain; and while some believed her, some, including her cousins, the Tonkins, did not. They were her next of kin and, though she'd snubbed them when first she came to St. Tid, now she was down and like to be a bed-lier for the rest of her days, they had another go at her and tried every way they knew to win her friendship. In fact you may say they left no stone unturned so to do, and it looked as if they was safe for any leavings, whatever happened, because Spry Tonkin had tinkered up to Lucinda and made her properly fond of him, so his mother felt that come what might, Sarah Sleep's savings — if there were any — would stop in the family.

Lucinda was a bright-eyed flaxen thing, cheerful as a sparrow and very glad to be alive. A good, true heart she had and a brave, sensible way with her; but she hadn't more sense than most pretty girls of eighteen, and so, when Spry Tonkin came along in his masterful way and kept company for a bit, and then actually offered himself, she was properly dazzled and made the mistake of her life. He wasn't right down bad exactly, but he was selfish and a bit shifty in his mind, though he

stood well at the slate quarries, where he worked, and none could bring any charge against him. He went to chapel with his people and all that; and so far as he could love anybody but himself, he loved Lucinda. But, at the bottom of his heart, he most certainly thought she was luckier than him and had got a very good bargain for her pretty face and pretty figure and nice, gentle disposition. He knew she'd be a loving, true wife: and he also knew he'd have the whip hand from the start and never have no trouble in imposing his will and his ways upon her.

All of which Sarah Sleep marked very clearly, and she never did smile upon Spry Tonkin and often wished that Lucinda had been tokened to a different chap; and that different chap was one of the rock-men at St. Tid quarry — a young, silent fellow with black hair and brown eyes — the strongest man of his hands that ever comed out of the village — a proper giant for strength in fact and well set up with it. But he was plain and little given to speech, and though he'd courted Lucinda in his quiet way for a good bit — ever since she was orphaned, and went to live with Miss Sleep — yet he'd never gone so far as to offer himself, and though like enough he'd have got her if he'd been more pushing, especially since Sarah Sleep was on his side, yet he weren't pushing by no means, and when Spry Tonkin — head-engineman he was — came to the front with all his fine speeches and swagger, little Lucinda went down before him and very soon lived for him and only him.

Stephen Kellow, the other man was called, and a few older people knew why old Sarah liked him; for his

father, in the far past, had worked for the Trelawnys and been their coachman, and the only romantic affair in Miss Sleep's life happened along of him. It was said, in fact, that he'd offered for her, and some thought she'd actually took him and quarrelled after. But at any rate Tom Kellow never married her, for he took the kitchen-maid instead, and though Sarah forgave him, she never forgot him; and when he went away from service and lived and died at Lanteagle, nigh St. Tid, Miss Sleep kept her eye on him to the last and, as a widower, he was on pretty friendly terms with her before he dropped. They whispered that she was at his death-bed and closed his eyes, but that was only hearsay. Anyway she always showed a friendly spirit to his two boys, Mike and Stephen, who both worked in St. Tid. So when Stephen began to pay attention to Lucinda, the old woman helped him all she could, and when Lucinda fell to her own nephew, Spry Tonkin, she was sorry and didn't hide it. She couldn't forbid the match, but she made a favour of one thing and asked Lucinda, for consideration for all she'd done for her, not wed the man till six months after she was dead. And Lucinda, a most grateful girl, promised to obey. As for Spry, he didn't like the condition at all, and was just getting restive about it when his aunt had her stroke and things looked brighter from his point of view.

During her illness she was wayward and some people she wouldn't suffer by her and others she commanded to attend; and among them she would see was the young youth, Stephen Kellow. She liked to have the

great, strong monster of a man at her side; and of an evening, or on a Sunday, when he wasn't to work, he'd sit along with her and read the newspaper to her and listen to tales about the old Trelawny days, and how clever his father was with a horse, and what a fool he was with a woman.

"They be difficult toads at best," she told him — "the women, I mean; and I daresay I was like the others and didn't know my place; but there's a good few sensible girls in the world for all that, and, if I know anything, Lucinda Parsons be one of them."

Stephen agreed very heartily with that. He heaved a sigh and rubbed his great hand through his hair and told Miss Sleep that he'd always thought the same.

"Never was a maiden like her," he said. "I'd have given my right hand to win her, Miss Sleep, and well she knew it; but these things ain't in our keeping."

"Not if we let 'em go out of our keeping," she answered. "You was always too backward and humble and silly. Girls choose a man as the blackbird chooses a cherry — by the outside — and you hid your heart so close and kept such a guard on your foolish tongue that, with all the will in the world, Lucinda could never get to know nothing about you. 'Tis only one girl in a thousand likes a silent man, and 'tis no good going courting as if you'd got a toothache all the time, or something on your mind, or your stomach, as don't agree with it."

"'Tis too late now," he said, "and I'm properly punished for being such a fool, for though she's all right and got the man of her choice, I'm all wrong and always

shall be. There was only one woman for me and I shall never see another."

But Miss Sleep wouldn't grant it was too late. In fact she went on most outrageous over it. She was always dragging up Stephen Kellow to Lucinda and always dragging up her to him; and she'd have 'em together by her bedside and lecture 'em like two children. Out of her sight Stephen would apologise to Lucinda for it and say it weren't his doing, and she'd say she knew it weren't, and that they must both suffer it for the sake of the sick woman. They explained their feelings to one another and Lucinda admitted that, but for her lover, she might in time have got to like Stephen, and he gave her sweetheart best for a clever and a brilliant man, and never said no hard word against Spry Tonkin; which didn't make Lucinda think any worse of him, of course.

So it went on till Sarah Sleep got in sight of her end; and presently she had another stroke, and on Michaelmas Day she died. Sauce to the goose at the Tonkins that was, and they could hardly wait for the funeral and the will.

Then, when they'd put her away and drunk a bottle of brown sherry between 'em and ate a pound of fancy biscuits, which be the right thing for a funeral seemingly, they sat in a row, like a lot of black crows — Milly Tonkin with her daughters one on each side of her, and Spry by Jane and Amos beside Nettie. There was one or two other relations come from Boscastle and St. Teath; but they didn't hope much and found themselves a good bit surprised in consequence. For Sarah

Sleep left nearly every blessed thing to relatives that she hadn't set eyes on for twenty-five years. It turned out her cottage was her own, which nobody knew but the former owner, and at her wish he hadn't mentioned it; but beyond that, all that she had wasn't worth fifty pound. The Tonkins got nought but a bit of nasty advice, and Lucinda got nought save a little, old, three-cornered cabinet as stood in the parlour. She'd often admired it, so Sarah Sleep left it to her under her will; and as for Stephen Kellow, much to his amazement, he got the house. 'Twas pretty well falling down, for Sarah wouldn't spend no money on it — saying, what seemed true enough, that she had nothing to spend. And so there it was, and it looked as if she'd told the truth after all and been living on an annuity; though there weren't no papers to show for it, and the lawyer didn't know nothing about it. There was a bit of sly fun poked at the Tonkins afterwards, till Spry got nasty and hit a man down in the dinner hour in the quarry for laughing at him about the will. Then the nine days' wonder died, and Stephen set about repairing his house in his spare time, and Lucinda, puzzled and sorrowful like, tried to console the Tonkins and found she couldn't.

In fact, very much to her grief, she discovered they were growing none too friendly to her, and after going in a good bit of doubt, she asked Nettie straight out what was the matter. And then she heard that they suspected she'd got the money on the quiet before Sarah Sleep died; and that was such a proper eye-opener for poor Lucinda that she very near fainted on

the floor. She poured her troubles into Spry's ear next time she got him alone; but he was moody and didn't take 'em much to heart, nor have a row with Nettie for saying such wicked things to Lucinda.

"I rather hoped it was true," he confessed. "It looks powerful like as if somebody had her money, for money there must have been, I'll swear; and I fancied, perhaps, as you'd got it and the old fool had told you to keep quiet about it till a bit later."

"Good powers, my dear!" cried Lucinda; "well, she knew I had no secret in the world from you, and never would have."

But Spry judged others by himself and didn't exactly believe her.

She bided in Kellow's cottage all alone for a bit, as Stephen begged her to do; and meanwhile expected that every time she met Spry Tonkin he'd ax her to name the day. But he didn't — not even when she told him she was going into service. All he did, when he heard that news, was to nod his head and say that no doubt for the minute she couldn't do better. And she went home and wept a bucket of tears about it. That it was the beginning of a big trouble, however, she couldn't see, and such is the muddle of mind that most men live in, I don't believe Spry Tonkin himself quite knew what he was doing in them days. Behind the scenes his mother and sisters would grumble at their disappointment and whisper still that Lucinda knew more about the truth than she pretended. In fact they worked themselves up till they felt positive she'd got the money, and then, building on moonshine, as women be

very prone to do, wanted to find out why Lucinda made a mystery of it and why, at any rate, she wouldn't confide in her sweetheart. Their buzzing influenced Spry a lot — more than he knew, in fact — yet, when he was alone with Lucinda and her voice in his ears and her eyes on his face, he couldn't somehow believe she wasn't straight, or telling him less than the truth when she said she hadn't got a secret in the world.

Presently she found work and went to Mrs. Retallack at the Old Farm. And seeing that she couldn't take her three-cornered cabinet with her, she asked Stephen Kellow if he'd let it bide with him. And he was willing. He lived with an old aunt and they meant to come and dwell at Stephen's new cottage, as soon as he had got the papering and painting done and the leaks mended and so on.

Then happened the great adventure that altered the face of the earth for three people and made history in a small way for St. Tid. History, I say, because, if you think on it, the unborn be the great thing in all history, and 'tis the coming together of men and women in this generation that lay the foundations of the next; and just the accident of love and the mingling of character settle what sort of men and women be going to run the world when their fathers and mothers are dead and gone.

Lucinda had been a fortnight at the Old Farm and was well liked there and might have been happy enough if it hadn't been for her own affairs. But, slow and deadly sure, her simple mind began to fear there was a screw loose with Spry Tonkin. She couldn't bring her-

self to say the words, nor yet even to think them; yet down in her heart she felt a pain and knew too well what had put it there.

There came a Sunday when they met by appointment by Newhall Mill in the woods, and Lucinda flew there light-foot with her eyes aglow and her heart happy as a song-bird, for a proper fine thing had happened to her — a wonderful stroke of fortune had come her way at last — and she was full of the most amazing bit of news you can well imagine.

That very morning it had come — 'twas in her bosom at that moment — and time dragged to eternity till she was free to be off to her tryst and pour her splendid story into Spry Tonkin's ear. And again and again she'd put up her hand to her breast, where something was stored away under her Sunday frock — a wonderful something to be put into her lover's hand with joy and thankfulness.

By the mill pool she walked and her dreams were so bright as the falling cherry leaves on the water, for 'twas autumn time and Newhall Mill pool's never braver than when the trees are yellow and gold and the leaf flying in October.

Spry Tonkin was late, in fact the girl began to faint for the sight of his body and the sound of his voice. She tramped for half an hour and more, yet couldn't run to meet him, for she wasn't sure which way he might come. And then, when she began to grow fearful that he'd forgot about it altogether, he came down by the spinney side, and she hurried up to greet him, and even in that great moment of excitement, she couldn't

but note that he was dragging his feet and looking cruel glum.

She was going to kiss him and pour out her fine tale; but to her horror Spry held off. His face was flushed and he appeared to be in a terrible nervous frame of mind, and though she was in a tearing hurry to speak, it seemed that he was in still more of a hurry. In fact he meant to have the first word; and so he did; and he had the last also. For his news came down on Lucinda like a shoe on a black beetle. 'Twas as though an earthquake had opened under her feet and a thunderbolt had fallen atop of her at the same moment. She heard the beginning and that was all that mattered for Lucinda. The rest didn't signify no more than the dead leaves in the water.

"Let me speak and get it over," he said. "'Tis a wisht, cruel thing for both of us, and I shall never be the same again, and my life's ruined for evermore. But I can't go on with this — I can't wed you, Lucinda. You're free. Marriage ain't in sight and never will be and — oh, there's a thousand good reasons why we shouldn't go no further. And the truth is that love's a damned, tricky, uncertain thing, and it comes and goes. In fact I don't love you no more. My misfortune, not my fault. But life's life and no man knows what may happen to him."

She stared, but kept her senses. Her hand went up to her dress, where the secret was hid; then it came down again. She swayed a bit and leaned against a tree behind her, while he went on talking about duty and the need to face disappointment and the shortness

of money, and whatever else his mean brains could telegraph to his tongue. And she answered never a word — not one word did she say, but just gazed before her, unseeing, unknowing, like a woman woke suddenly from sleep.

He wearied presently, for he'd expected a bit of a counterblast, no doubt.

"Will you walk along, Lucinda, and give me your views, please? I've talked enough," he said presently.

"I ain't got no views," she answered him. "And you've talked enough, as you say. And I'll ax you to leave me, Mr. Tonkin."

He messed about a little longer and said he hoped to God they'd always respect each other and be good friends; but she didn't speak again, so presently he took off his hat and said he'd wish her "Good evening."

And then he crept off.

She held upright and game till he was round the edge of the wood, and then her knees went and she came over giddy for a minute and slipped down and sat on the ground. She was properly stunned, without a doubt; yet her woman's sense had saved her; her brain never stopped working in that terrible moment, and while her heart had cried to her that she might have won him back with a word, her head told her that to do so would be a terrible mistake. For every woman knows, or did ought to know, that the man who can be bought ain't worth buying.

So she kept her mouth shut, and the handsome price she got for that wonderful feat was her future happiness.

She took a little flat parcel out of her breast presently and was in a mind to fling it in the mill pool and herself after it. But she didn't. She just went back to the water and, feeling weak in the knees, sat beside it and stared and watched the voles on the banks and a mother moorhen with her chicks. The outside of her mind idly followed the creatures; the inside just throbbed, like a dying fire when the ashes rustle and the last sparks fade.

She went back to the farm presently and the awful thing returned and returned, like the memory of a sudden death. For this was death to her hope and her love. It crushed her and bent her head and dimmed her eyes; and the great news of the morning was all Dead Sea fruit now and life looked no more than a dreary count of lonely, grey years not worth living.

But if, as Spry Tonkin truly said, "life's life," so we may say as truly that "youth's youth." And youth will be served. Lucinda came to herself after a bit, and what her wits had whispered in that terrible moment her neighbours didn't hesitate to say out loud. Mrs. Retallack, properly pleased at heart to find she weren't going to lose Lucinda after all, assured the girl that she was well out of it, and that her luck had stuck to her far better than she thought.

You see it happened this way: that very Sunday morning at chapel, who should be there but Stephen Kellow? and after service he'd walked a bit of her road beside Lucinda and put a packet in her hand and explained how he'd come by it.

"'Tis yours," he said, "and you'll find twenty-five golden sovereigns in a little, wool pence-jug, and seven hundred-pound notes and four five-pound notes pinned together with a safety pin. That makes seven hundred and forty-five pounds; and I'll thank you to count it over afore I go and give me a line on a bit of paper saying as you've got the money."

He was always cautious like that, Stephen Kellow was.

Mrs. Retallack made him come in the Old Farm and eat his Sunday dinner with them and tell his tale. But there was very little to tell. On the afternoon before, he'd taken down Lucinda's cabinet because he was sticking up some fresh wall-paper in the parlour; and then noticing 'twas shabby and wanted a polish up, he'd opened it and started to clean it. And inside he found a little drawer locked and the lock hidden under a beading. There weren't no key, but he'd got it open with a bit of wire and found the money. And that made Lucinda remember something which she'd forgot till then. Six months and more before she died, Sarah Sleep had given the girl a key and told her to store it safe, because she'd want it some day. But Lucinda had never called it back to her mind till this moment.

"I'm glad to hear that," said Stephen, "because if that's the key, 'tis good evidence of what Miss Sleep meant, and now none can doubt the money was intended to be yours."

So there it stood and time proved the key was right, though only pure luck ever got Sarah's legacy to

Lucinda. They puzzled after to know why she'd made such a secret of it; but Mrs. Retallack threw light on that and so did a good few others.

"She done it because she saw through Master Spry," said Mrs. Retallack, comforting Lucinda that night. "She was a long-sighted woman and a good judge of a body's worth, and she hoped that if you was left with nought when she died, he'd throw you over; and she was right, for he did. And I'll tell you another thing: 'twouldn't fill me with amazement if I heard that silent Stephen Kellow wasn't in the secret from the first and knew all about it. And if he did, he was a fool to let it out so soon. If you'd took your good news to Spry Tonkin a week sooner, you'd have heard no more about his flinging you over; and if you'd ever got in your own oar first and spoke to him before he spoke to you, he would have changed his mind and you'd have married a man as had already decided to chuck you."

The horror of that thought kept Lucinda awake every night for a week.

Of course the end was bound to be just what that dead woman had wanted and planned for. Kellow swore most solemn he'd never heard of the money before he came across it, and a bit later he found his tongue in earnest and asked Lucinda to come and see her old home. And when she came, he fairly begged her to stop in it; and she agreed to do so.

They was tokened in a week after Spry Tonkin had said his say, and if he'd hit down every man who laughed at him then, he'd have had his hands full for a month

o' Sundays. The Tonkins never forgave her, of course, and never believed the story. They held to it she was a sly, evil minx, and had hid the money till she made Spry give her up. And no doubt they honestly thought so. But none else ever did — not even another girl that Spry got tinkering after afore he chucked Lucinda. He got left there, too, and then, he found himself fairly fed up with St. Tid and went off to the quarries in Pennsylvania, where plenty of St. Tid men are working at American slate. As for Lucinda and Stephen, they wedded at Christmas and only Mrs. Retallack was sorry about it.

THE SAINT AND THE LOVERS

When my mother died, father, as had waited very patient till then, made tracks and was never seen no more. He closed her eyes, and said, "Thank God she's a goner." Then he went to the cupboard and mixed a Samson, which be a drink of brandy and cider; and then he packed his fardel, and took his tools and marched out of Madron for ever.

Father was called Thomas Chirgwin, and he'd been a mine-captain once and very well thought upon; but he fell to drink, and got lower and lower, till when mother went, after a cruel bad time of it, he was sunk to day-labourer's work on the roads. After he cleared out there wasn't money to pay for burying mother, and but for Uncle William I should have had to go in the workhouse; but he came forward then, though I was only a little chap — twelve year old, and no good for nought but keeping crows from corn and such like.

I'd worked at that for him afore, and got a penny a day and my victuals by it; and now, since I was left alone in the world, the man took me over, and I went along to his farm between Madron church-town and the moors. Journey's End the place was called — a little low house in a parcel o' trees, wi' good tilth round about, though not much of it. 'Twas Uncle William's own, and he'd bought it after fifty year of work, and he

was terrible proud of it and of himself for winning it.

Billy Chirgwin was one of them little go-by-the-ground men — a podgy, short, and stumpy chap. Red in the face and blue in the eye he was, and he wore his hair in a fringe under his double chin; but his crown was bald, and stood up over his red, wrinkled neck and forehead, like an egg out of its cup.

A lot of sense he had to him, but he was obstinate, and when he made up his mind, 'twas a thing no more to be changed than what happened yesterday. He hated women, and had a mistaken fancy they was all after him — for the sake of the farm; so the woman's work to Journey's End was done by married ones. For a long time the head man and his wife, Mrs. Polglaze, lived with Uncle William: but when Tim Polglaze found a job he liked better, of course, they went, and the master was in a great quandary what to do. He might have had a score of widdy-women, but he mistrusted that sort worst, so at last he tried a fisherman's wife from Newlyn. But she failed him cruel, and drank his spirits, and was always asking her husband up to tea. Then uncle sent her packing, and swore by the saints that he wouldn't have no more females about him.

"Us'll do wi'out 'em, and a good riddance," he said. "It shall be St. Tibb's Eve [1] afore another petticoat comes here. You've got to learn to cook, Samuel, and the sooner the better."

I never went against nothing he said, and I did my bestest, but I turned out a terrible bufflehead at it, and

[1] *St. Tibb's Eve.* Never.

after uncle had been took bad twice with a feeling like a cannon ball in his left side, he saw that cooking wasn't in my way.

"What the mischief you do to the meat and puddings I don't know, Samuel," he said to me; "but I want twopen'orth o' peppermint every time I let down a dish you've cooked; and so, no doubt, 'tis true that only Frenchmen can cook, and Englishmen can't larn it."

Neither of the other two chaps at Journey's End would take the kitchen work on, and both said that if such belly-vengeance food was to be the rule they'd have to go.

Uncle was a good bit put out, but he saw the reason of it, though he had a slap at me afore he changed his plans.

"I thought you was going to be a useful chap, Samuel," he said to me one morning. "Ess fay, I declare to myself that you would prove a blessing in disguise; but as things are, I be like the Mayor of Falmouth — him as gave God the praise when they doubled the size of the gaol. You'm a terror, and you'm paying me for my kindness by trying to shorten my life."

"Wait till dinner, Uncle William," I said.

I'd made a star-gazing pie for dinner that day, and it promised so well as ever a pie did promise. 'Tis a pie of paste and pilchards, and you bake it wi' the fish pokin' their noses through the crust. Pretty eating, too; but, of course, it have got to be handled clever, and I failed again. The dowl knows what I'd done to the

pie, but 'twas as hard as granite outside, and the fish was raw underneath.

Uncle he got it open, and me and t'other men looked hopefully upon it; and then uncle dashed down his knife and fork and shouted out:

"Fetch in the bread and cheese, and take this here ondacent mess to the pigs."

'Twas the last straw, you might say, and after all his great speeches in the village and out, Uncle Chirgwin was forced to go back on his word, and seek a woman for the farm.

"'Tis a matter of life and death," I heard him say to Mrs. Tressider at our outer gate the next evening.

"'Tis life or death, or I wouldn't do it. But I've lost two teeth out of my false lot — snapped off like stubble in yonder boy's parlous cooking — and my innards be just one everlasting strife, and my sleep's forsaking me. So it have got to end. And if you know a respectable married woman that can handle a bit of bacon and a potato without disgracing herself, you'll do me a kindness to name her."

Mrs. Tressider thought, and, motherlike, cast her mind over her own first. She had ten, and the first batch, by her husband Thomas Cardew — him as was killed in Carn Brea Mine — were all doing well, and the youngest was turned sixteen; but the second lot, by Michael Tressider, they were only coming on, and the eldest of 'em had reached no more than thirteen at this time. Mrs. Tressider thought a bit, knowing Uncle William's weakness; then she spoke.

"I suppose now as you wouldn't be afeared of a

maiden not seventeen year old? I understand very well how 'tis with you, Mr. Chirgwin, and I know the females are cunning toads, and I've always thought you was terrible clever to keep out of their way same as you have done; but there's my darter, Cherry — she couldn't have no designs on 'e at her tender age, and what that girl don't know about cooking idden worth knowing. She's the nessel-bird [1] of my first husband's family, and a towser for work, and very understanding every way."

"If she ban't seventeen, she wouldn't think to catch a man very near seventy, of course," says Uncle William.

"That she would not. And my advice to you is to give her a trial. Clean as a new pin, Cherry is, and always cheerful, and always to work."

"She'll be a gallavanter at her age," said uncle doubtfully.

But Mrs. Tressider pressed it, and sang Cherry Cardew's praises, and added that if she was a failure, the girl could easily be sent home again.

And so it fell out that she came along to see if she was clever enough to please the master of Journey's End.

But uncle he went to old Mother Trewoof afore he closed with the offer. She was the only woman he ever believed in, and seeing that she was the wisest creature on the countryside, he couldn't choose but do so. A sort of white witch many called her, and for certain she knowed a cruel lot of strange things. But her

[1] *Nessel-bird.* The youngest.

advice was run after, and she was very large-minded, and didn't care a pin whether you took it or left it, so long as you paid her fee.

Mother Trewoof said no harm could come of trying Cherry Cardew, and so Cherry came, and it idden too much to say that she managed all us men from the first. Such wits no young thing ever had afore; and as for cooking, Uncle William found hisself unwell again after she'd been in the house three days; but this time he said that 'twas only a testament to the girl's skill, because the food was so proper he'd ate far too much of it.

So she stayed and much came of that. Cherry was tall, and straight, and slim to look at, but she had dear little womanly rounds about her, and a womanly smallness of hands and feet. She wore a pink print workdays, and had a very fine blue gown when she went out. Her eyes were large, and so grey as glass, but she kept her eyelids down over 'em a lot, and her lashes spread out in a very pretty fashion. She had a nubby nose and a lovely colour to her cheeks, which were very near so bright as blotting paper. And her mouth was large, but a lovely shape. She'd a regular stack of corn-coloured hair, as she wore piled up so bright as a little barleymow 'pon top of her head; and she was always cheerful and willing.

But she kept herself to herself a good bit, and you couldn't tell she was in the house half the day but for her singing. Uncle was troubled about the singing at first, but he put up with it, for he soon found out his luck and didn't want to do nothing to drive the girl away.

And then, after she'd been along with us nine or ten months, and drawing six pound a year for it, a terrible queer thing happened to me.

I was up eighteen old by now — a gert, hulkin' chap, over six foot, and terrible strong; and me and a good few others was wont to meet of a Sunday nigh Madron church, and smoke and air our opinions, and watch the passers-by. It happened one afternoon, as I stood there along with half a score of others, that Peter Noy, from Gulval, was amongst us, and he made a scornful speech in my hearing. A terrible chap for the maidens, he was — had a sort of bullying, God-Almighty way with him they couldn't stand against. Like spaniels they bore themselves afore him, though whatever they saw in the red-headed creature none of us other men could guess.

"Who be that wench wi' the green eyes?" suddenly asked Peter.

'Twas Cherry, and her mother, Mrs. Tressider, had just gone in to worship along with her and three or four children.

He couldn't have meant no girl else, so I answered him.

"'Tis Miss Cherry Cardew," I said, "and her eyes ban't no more green than your hair."

"So green as a leaf," he answered. "If I don't know what colour a girl's eyes be, 'tis pity."

"You'm a liard, Peter Noy," I said.

Well, he was an upstanding chap, a good few year older than me, and a bit heavier, though not so tall. He didn't know how terrible strong I was, or he might

have thought again; but when I told him plump out that he was a liard, he didn't much like it, and come over and put his face within an inch of mine.

"You say that again and I'l drop you in the ditch," says Peter.

"Come up to the wood and you shall hear it again so oft as you like to hear it," I answered him.

So we made a move up over, where Madron woods come to the tilth, and seven or eight of us went in a nice thicket out of harm's way; and then I told the man he was a liard and a silly fool in the bargain, if he didn't know the difference betwixt grey and green.

With that we took off our coats and waistcoats, and our Sunday collars and ties. I was for fighting, but Peter said the case didn't call for that and he was going to wrastle; and 'twas all one to me, for I could do either.

We cockled up to each other, and I gave him a Cornish hug that bent in his ribs a bit; and, afore he knowed we was beginning, the man found hisself on his back in the thorns. Thrice I felled him, and then he shook hands very friendly and I did the same; and we was good companions ever after and no harm done; and he finished by saying that the girl's eyes might be any colour I pleased and be damned to her. So we left it at that, and the job wouldn't have been worth mentioning but for one thing. It told me a wonderful queer bit of news.

I said to myself going home that evening, "If you can get sparring over a thing like that, Sam Chirgwin, and if you care whether a maiden's eyes be green or grey, there's something in it." And then it comed over me,

like a flash of lightning, that I cared for Cherry. I'd felt a sort of uneasy hankering to put my arms around her and squeeze her for six months very near; but she wasn't that sort and I knowed it. Then, with time, I'd growed to feel different and now I'd no more have dared to touch her than strike her. "You'm a gert gaby, and you'd best to put such foolery out of yur head," I told myself. And I tried, but I couldn't do it.

Besides, she changed herself at this time. Some chap — Freddy Lanine I think 'twas — told her about my fun with Peter Noy, and the reason for it — and it appeared to vex her something terrible, for she growed all woman in a day and cold-shouldered me as if I'd done a wicked act. I thought at first that Peter Noy had catched her, but 'twasn't that. She knowed all about him and said she'd rather go to the grave a maiden than have anything to do with a carrot-headed man.

So times was changed, and I soon knowed I loved her furious. My eyes watered afore her, and my mouth, too, for that matter. She was a bowerly piece, and of course I weren't the only one by many. But she went her way, as if there weren't a man in the world; and, come her day out, to her mother she always would go.

Then I took my courage, after a sweaty night o' fear, and axed her, in so many words, if she'd go for a walk some evening. She looked sideways under them lovely little frills of eyelash and said she'd think of it, and I noticed when I talked to her now that my voice was all over the shop. Two days later I axed her again and she said she'd come; and she did come. 'Twas the

dimpsy of a summer evening, and we went up over past St. Madron's well and chapel on the hill. We walked out in the moor presently, and pitched on a stone and watched the light fade out of the sky. 'Twas still and fine, and the engine-stack of Wheal Darkness looked so black as ink against the sunset, and the airy-mice was winging and squeaking very lively along the edge of the woods.

Yet try as I might, I couldn't find nothing to tell about.

'Twas a very silent walk in fact, but I kept looking upon her a lot, and for the most part she held her eyes to the ground.

"That's a terrible big dew-snail," I said once, pointing to a great black creature crawling over the grass.

"So 'tis then," she answered.

"You don't sing about the house so much as you did use," I said again, ten minutes later.

"Don't I?" she asked.

"No," I answered, "you do not."

But nothing came of it.

Then I had a slap at another subject. "The evening star be wonderful bright," I said.

"Not brighter than usual," thought Cherry. But I declared that it was and she wouldn't argue about it and allowed I might be in the right. Then I had a happy idea and asked her why for she was called Cherry, and she said, "I idden. My true name's Charity. But Mr. Tressider took a great dislike to it — him being a Socialist — and 'twas him as ordained to change it."

This was a bit of news to me, and I sat and thought upon the point for a half hour I dare say. Then, far off, us heard Madron church clock tell nine.

"'Tis time we was gwaine back along," I said.

Presently a night bird began hollering, and another answered it, and I told Cherry 'twas owls, but she thought 'twas more like crying children. I made some joke then about the pisgies and the spriggans; but she grew comical-tempered in a minute, and I found that she took all such matters very serious.

"You don't mean for to say you believe in the little people?" I asked her, and she told me to mind my own business. It promised to spoil the end of the walk, but she forgived me afore we'd got home, though not till I apologized very humble. I said:

"I'm a know-naught gert fool, Cherry, and I dare say there's millions of fairies in Cornwall yet, and why not? And I'm sure you be so wonderful as a fairy yourself for that matter."

I felt that was pretty smart, and she liked it, too, and said as none could prove there wasn't fairies, while a lot of very clever people knowed for certain that there was. Her own father had heard the spriggans knocking in the mine two days afore he was killed, and her grandfather had been pisgey-led two different times in his life, and could swear to it on the Book.

I said as the walk had done me a power of good, and made so bold as to hope she'd come up over and pitch on thicky stone again sometimes; and she said that if us had such another fine evening she didn't know but what she might.

At day-down a week later we went again, and I had terrible poor speed. They say that " perfect love casteth out fear," but I'll be blessed if mine did. I was a strong, hulking giant of a man and could face anything on four legs, or anything on two for that matter — anything but Cherry.

I don't know what 'twas, but I was dumb as a quilkin [1] when along with her, and yet right down miserable when out of her sight. I felt it couldn't go on, and yet something told me to try and please her and I toiled to do it; and sometimes I got a smile and a kind word, and sometimes she growed that short and impatient with me that I felt any minute she might slap my face.

'Twas an up and down sort of time, and I very near ran away once or twice, for the strain was cruel. Now and then I'd get forwarder, and then all the good was done away; and now and then I'd almost feel bold enough to speak and offer for her; but that was generally of a night, and when the morning come my spirit was gone.

She was that uncertain.

She'd do terrible kind things one day and cut me to the heart the next. And then she went out twice along with Johnny Vingoe, and I felt things was at a climax.

Uncle William got a tissick on the chest about then — 'twas springtime again — and he wanted to see Mother Trewoof for it, and she comed in one evening and looked at the man.

In her clever way she'd guessed what was amiss with him afore she saw him, and she brought along marjo-

[1] *Quilkin.* Frog.

ram and elder and a few suchlike herbs to make a valiant drink. And seeing what 'twas, she bade Cherry hot the kettle and fetch a saucepan.

Then she began to make the physic; and while she made it she talked.

Uncle, he crouched a gurglin' and chockin' in his dog-eared chair one side the fire; Mother Trewoof, she knelt at the hearth and stirred; Cherry sat by the table darning socks, and I was not far off making rabbit nets — a job at which I was pretty spry. T'other men weren't in, and us sat there silent as mice, but for uncle's wheezin', and listened to Mother Trewoof.

Cruel fine talk she made. Few were the hidden things that woman didn't know, and she was terrible vexed with life as it was, and much wished us could all go back to life as it used to be.

"Along of these here fansical schools," she said, "the children doan't believe in nothing at all, and the old, ripe wisdom of us ancient folk be dust in the balance to 'em.

"As if we didn't know and hadn't seen with our eyes and our forefathers afore us! Take charms for instance, who can cure wild-fire, or burning, or toothache like I can? Who can staunch blood so quick as me? Yet, where fifty in a year was wont to come to me for such service, five don't now. And look at the holy stones up over — the stone with a hole in un, called the crick-stone, and the written stone and other sacred and magic things — all idle — all idle. Who visits the crick-stone now? Who goes there for lumbagey or rheumatism, or other cricks, and crawls through the

hole again and again against the way of the sun? What mothers take their babes there to make 'em strong and lusty? Yet well I know the hidden vartue and have proved it a thousand times."

"We'm forgetting the clever things our fathers did. 'Pears as if the world was to be saved by electricity nowadays," said Uncle William. Then he coughed fit to die.

"Doan't you be talking: list to me," answered Mother Trewoof.

"As for electricity a time will come when us shall pray to our God to take it away again. 'Tis playing with lightning at best and the devil's weapon in my opinion. Didn't the saints know? When the holy men comed hither in a boat-load from Ireland, 'twasn't electricity they brought but the power of God, and the trick of doing miracles in the Name.

"They didn't quarrel with nobody. They let the conjurers and white witches and small people alone, and them as wanted the Light of Christianity was welcome to it, and them as didn't, could go their own dark way, so long as they had no truck with God's chosen. But 'tis all gone now — swept away by the board-schools and city-bred teachers, as have no faith in nothing but themselves and machinery."

She poured the herby tea in a basin and told Cherry to set it upon the window-sill to cool.

"They saints done a power of good no doubt," said my uncle.

"Iss fay! and would again tomorrow if anybody had the faith to trust 'em," answered the old woman.

"Take our own — take St. Madron — us don't want to go not a step further for healing wonders. Yet who tramps up along to his chapel now? Who dips there in the running water — once blessed, always blessed? Who bathes there for the thing their heart wanteth, and calls to the listening saint for it, and then goeth home rejoicing?"

"Not a soul," admitted Uncle William. "Yet when I was a young man 'twas a deed not seldom practised, and many a mother dipped her babby in the old font and left a rag hanging in the thorn tree over the altar-stone. I can mind so many as twenty rags dancing there to a time; and the birds would come and pluck at 'em for their nestes."

"The magic be there," declared Mother Trewoof. "The good belongs to the water for ever more, and that's why it don't run dry in the hottest summer like other common streams.

"Tis blessed, and it ban't the saint's fault, nor yet mine, that the people don't make use of it. But there 'tis, with all its vartue, running to waste year after year. All I know is this, I wouldn't be without a bottle in my house for untold gold."

Uncle said 'twas meat and drink to him to hear tell such things, and I stole a look at Cherry to see what she thought; but she was darning for dear life, and didn't 'pear to be interested. And I was glad of it, because there had come in my head a dashing thought. I stared at her, but my mind was lifting far beyond Journey's End and the people in it. I felt a wonnerful call. I felt so strong as a team of horses. 'Twas

borne in upon me, like the Light was borne in on Paul, that this here St. Madron might be the very man for my business. And I said to myself, "If a wise woman like this here, and a wise man like uncle, can believe in the holy saint, what right have a gert silly like me to dare to doubt?"

And then I cast my eyes upon Cherry again, wi' her hair bright as gold in the cannel-light, and her head standing out like a picksher against the old cloam, and butterprints and glass and the like on the dresser behind her. Mother Trewoof talked a bit more; then she had a drink of uncle's spirits, and he had a dose of her physic, and the night ended.

But sleep wouldn't come to me, and I was already thirstin' for the light of day, being full of St. Madron and his chapel and his well. 'Twas my resolve at dawn to be up over and get in the ruin and dip for luck, and call upon the saint with all my might to give me what I wanted — in the shape of Cherry Cardew. I knowed very well 'twas time and more than time I axed, and yet the awful fear of getting a frosty answer had held me back. But somehow, after hearing Mother Trewoof, I burned wi' strength and resolution, and did believe most steadfast that the saint would give heed. I argued long with myself upon it, too. I weren't asking the holy man for no impossibilities. For instance, if Cherry had been tokened to any other chap, I wouldn't have done it; but, for all I knowed to the contrary, she was heart-whole and free as air; and I felt that if she had secrets about Johnny Vingoe then, be it as it would, 'twas time I knowed 'em. For one thing had got to be

deathly sure in my mind; and that was, if I couldn't get Cherry, I should have to sling my hook beyond sight and sound of her.

At peep o' day I was sleeping like a pig, and didn't wake till nearly four o'clock. But I got in my clothes very quick, and was soon away to St. Madron's chapel — a horny-winky, lonesome place 'pon the moor-edge, a mile from Journey's End.

Up I went through a strong easterly breeze, and the spring was in the air, and green things breaking out of the dead grey ones under my feet and all round about. An early lark had gone aloft to catch the first sunlight, and he'd catched it and hung, like a spark o' fire, far ways up in the blue pouring his heart out. So I came to the holy well and ruined chapel. 'Tis a queer little broken-down spot wi' walls no higher than a man's shoulder, and stone seats running inside. Briers and grass and moss be over all, and above the altar-stone there standeth a great white-thorn girt with an ivy-tod. Furze and heather bind the ruin together; the stone floor is broke up with green grass and daisies, and on the altar be a hole that had catched rain from the last shower, and flashed back the brightness of the sky.

St. Madron's stream ran behind aglint and full of noise, and the wild parsley was budding beside it, and the forget-me-nots twinkling blue above the water, and the furze towering up in a bank of gold above. And as I came here, at the first red sunrise light, I was struck into a gert terror, for upon the altar-stone I saw clothes and a woman's white smicket and a pair of shoon and stockings. Then, bending down, I peered out through

a hole in the wall, and my knees knocked, and I went bivvering over with cold, as though I'd been struck with frost.

For there was Cherry just rising mother-naked out of St. Madron's stream. Her hair was blowing round her, like the merry-dancers, and the morning light touched it and she herself flashed through it, white as curds. Her eyes were brighter than any stars; and that's all I knowed, for I went so weak as a goose-chick afore that wonnerful sight, because I'd never seen a girl unrayed in all my life afore, and 'tis a most amazing thing. I dropped then, as if I'd been shot, and crawled off, and she come to the altar-stone, and I heard her singing like a grey bird, and getting back in her clothes.

I didn't dare to move, but hid in a brake close by outside the chapel, till she was off and away. I lie there thinking and wondering and sweating with jealousy, for somehow I guessed very well she had come to pray to the saint; and what her prayer had been about I'd have give ten year off my life to know.

Presently I crept forth and looked around. She'd left a rag of her dress on the white-thorn tree for luck, and 'twas fluttering there on the wind; and in the sand by the stream I found a clear print of her foot — five little toes and heel; and such was my cruel state o' mind that I knelt down and kissed it!

Somehow I couldn't go back that minute. My tongue was dry as a chip, and I drank a drop of St. Madron's brook. Then I wandered about an hour and more, and then I went home-along. But I turned

against breakfast, and the thought of seeing Cherry put me in a regular terror, so I just went to the stable and fetched out a hoss and marched off to my morning's work. 'Twas harrowing, I remember, and hour after hour I followed the machine, and felt as if the tines were running over me instead of the earth; and yet somehow I knowed myself to be a long sight more of a man than ever I had been until that morning.

'Twas the first and last time in my life as I didn't feel what 'twas to be hungry at noon. But I didn't, and when I saw Cherry clambering up over the field wi' a frail, I very near jumped over the hedge and ran for it.

But the man in me had done with that nonsense, thank God, and I stood my ground, so stiff as a stake, and said to myself, "I'll ax her or die."

In a minute she was there, cool and cheerful; and she soon oped the basket and fetched out a pasty and my little wood runlet, as I kept for cider.

"Why for didn't you come to breaksis?" she says. "What a timdoodle of a chap you be!"

"I know that very well," I answers her. "But there was a reason."

"I've brought 'e dinner."

"And cruel kind of you to bring it."

She was going then, but I nerved myself and begged her if she'd be so kind as to bide while I ate it.

She didn't seem much astonished at the idea, and I gave his nosebag to the hoss and spread my coat for Cherry on the lew side of a hedge, and us sat down together.

I knowed if I once began talking on general subjects my courage would fade, so I dashed head-first into it, afore I had time to quail, and I said:

"Look here, Cherry, I'm very near out of my seven senses about you, and I love you like a burning fire, and there 'tis — will 'e keep company and be Cherry Chirgwin presently? And if you don't — if you don't — God's my judge but I'll jump down a mine, for I can't live without 'e, and wouldn't if I could!"

'Twas out, and once out I felt so brave as a leash o' lions, and stared straight in her face and felt my arms tingling to be round her.

She flickered up till her cheeks was red as herb robert, and gave me one precious look, and then her eyes went down, and her little lovely head went down too.

"I know'd you'd ax me today, Sam," she said in a small voice. "Yes, I very well knowed you would come to it today."

"And what do 'e say to me?"

"I love you, I love you, I love you!"

Three times she spoke it, and would have said it a fourth, but she hadn't no more time, for I was on her like a tiger.

"'Tis all St. Madron," she said, when I let her draw breath; and then she confessed that she'd been up to the chapel and called upon the holy man to give me a helping hand.

I made as if I was terrible astonished, and that night I put it afore Uncle William very crafty.

"She'm wife-old," I said, "and you well remember you always wanted a married woman to look after you,

so 'twill fit in all right. And you know better than I can tell that you wouldn't be without Cherry for the world, nor yet without me, so there it lies."

He hadn't got much kick in him just then, along of the tissick in his chest. Therefore he soon gave in about it.

And six months later me an' Cherry was wedded, to the Wesleyan chapel, though as she said, she'd far sooner have had it done up to St. Madron's ruin.

Never a word of the great adventure did she hear till our marriage night, and then I told her, but it didn't shake her faith in the saint — nor yet in me.

THE BETTER MAN

When Julitta Bunt lost her husband 'twas merely a question in the minds of St. Tid what man she would take next. Not that she had ever been anything but a very good wife to the poor chap; and, indeed, on his death-bed he had said that he'd been greatly blessed in her and was cruel sorry to leave her and his little girl. Death can come welcome or unwelcome, as the case may be; and in Tom Bunt's case it weren't welcome by any means, for he was only eight and twenty, in the fulness of strength and prosperity, with a fair future and good money, and well thought of at the slate quarry, where he was a rockman. The rockmen, of course, be those who go down into the pit and break or blast out the slate, while the hillmen be those that work above at the pappot head, or in the slate dressing sheds, or at the engines, and so on.

And poor Tom Bunt, in the course of his regular business, came to grief; for he'd lit off a fuse and was getting clear in good time, as he thought, when something went wrong and the charge was exploded within ten feet of him. Even then only one rock hit him; but that was enough, and he died four days after, leaving Julitta and his little three-year-old, Betsy, to fend for themselves.

And none was better able to do so than his widow; for she was a comely piece, and had good brains and

held her head high. The dark sort she was, with a brave colour in her face, and brown eyes and brown hair to match 'em. A quick, decided way with her and a good conceit of herself; but it never ran over into pride, for she was sensible and self-respecting. And another virtue she had; for she loved a bit of fun and could take a joke in the right spirit, which you'll find is a very rare gift in any woman under seventy.

Four and twenty was Julitta when the joy of her life was taken from her, and she mourned with all her heart, and kept in black weekdays as well as Sundays, and put up a very good piece of St. Tid slate to Tom.

A man or two offered for her before her husband's grave was green; and so ashamed of 'em was she that they could lower themselves to do so, that she told 'em that if they were worth their weight in gold she wouldn't take such indecent creatures. But those who knew a bit about her, including her godfather, old Jimmy Nute of the quarries, rather thought that it was going to be a case of virtue rewarded for Simon Keat, a hillman as worked at one of the guillotines in a dressing shed. He was a bachelor, up home thirty years old, a fair and flaxen man, and very famous for his strength. Simon felled every middleweight wrestler in Cornwall three years running and few heavyweights had ever thrown him. He shone also as a stickler [umpire]; for none beat the man in judgment of the game, or in his sense of justice. He was a very quiet and unassuming chap in company, and oped his mouth so seldom that many people, especially the females, thought him a bit of a

mumphead; but it weren't so by any means. He had a lot of sense and a fair amount of general knowledge, which he'd picked up thanks to his habit of listening instead of talking.

And he knew his own mind very well, and he'd known ever since she was seventeen that he wanted to marry Julitta. On his twenty-second birthday he'd first offered to do so, and on his twenty-third he done the same; and he meant to do the like again the next year, and hoped that the third time would be lucky. But meanwhile came along Tom Bunt. So there was an end of Simon! He lost with good grace, for he was a level-minded man and had fine sporting instincts; but he felt, as he couldn't have Julitta, that he'd go without anybody, and he stopped along with his parents quiet and fairly contented with his lot, and he was always a very good friend to the Bunts.

And then Julitta came in the market again. But Simon held off in a very gentlemanly way; for he knew the depth of her grief, and not only as a matter of proper feeling did he respect it, but as a matter of business also, because it quickly came out what she'd said to the rash men who thrust in with offers of marriage upon her green widowhood.

So he waited, and just gave Julitta the time of day, and brought a toy for little Betsy sometimes, and planted some very nice pansies of his own raising on Tom Bunt's grave. But more than that he didn't do, and she liked him all the better for holding off. Indeed she'd always liked him; but it was that deadly sort of liking that can't very easy quicken into anything else.

She knew his game, of course, and had plenty of time to think it over and make up her mind about the future so far as Simon was concerned. And then, just as the young woman began to feel it had to be and was getting herself in tune to the necessary effort of rising to love Simon Keat, there rose up another man in her sight — and a very dazzling figure of a man he was.

The Nanjulians were a very old and respected family at St. Tid, and they had been connected with the quarries for time out of mind; but many an adventurous youth among 'em had found his heart beat too high for North Cornwall, and not a few, after learning the quarryman's business at home, had left St. Tid for the bigger world outside and gone where slate was calling to be worked. Many went to Wales; but more to Pennsylvania in America, because the United States have got the greatest slate quarries in the world,— same as they have everything else of the greatest,— and in Pennsylvania this day you'll find more St. Tid men and women than in St. Tid church town itself.

Billy Nanjulian was one of the wandering sort, and he went to his uncle, Paul Nanjulian, in Pennsylvania and got good work there. And then, just at the critical time in the lives of Julitta and Simon, back came Billy in all his world-wide wisdom to take a wife from St. Tid; for not a few of the young fellows did that, though some married American women and never came home no more.

The truth was that Master Billy had wanted to do the same; and we heard long after, through another

source, that he'd just been cold-shouldered by a terrible clever maiden in Pennsylvania, who saw through him in time for her own salvation and found it was her father's dollars and not she herself that young Nanjulian was really after. She'd hit out from the shoulder after that and told handsome Billy the truth about his character, and, liking it little, home he'd come to forget her and to play the hero a bit and try for better luck; for he knew that he was terrible good-looking and a fair mark for the women. He was the sort of man the females will spoil, who, under a terrible gracious and smiling way and great humility before them, hides a keen look-out for the main chance and a determination to sell himself only at the top of the market. And that the maiden in Pennsylvania had found out and put it bitter clear before the man; so he'd come home to heal his bruises and see if there was anything in the female line worthy of him in his birthplace.

And what happened surely showed that there's good in every man, and love will conquer every meaner passion sometimes; for Nanjulian, whatever he'd pretended before to other females, soon found himself properly set on Julitta. She was a kinswoman of his on the spindle side, and they had relations in common; so it was easy for him to see a lot of her. He was holiday-making too, and afore he'd been home six weeks his one aim and object in life was to win her and take her back along to Pennsylvania. She was poor as a mouse and also had her little woman child to keep; but he didn't care for that. Though a man of common pattern under his fine outside, love her he did with the

finest worship and affection of which he was capable, and there's no doubt that Julitta took a very great interest and liking to his outside from the first.

A splendid man he was, with curly hair and the strength of a horse,— one of they broad-chested, big fellows, well barrelled up, and sturdy as an oak tree; a dark, blue-chinned man, who shaved twice a day now he was courting, and wore very fine clothes from America that made the garments of St. Tid look homely. A diamond ring he had also, and other adornments, and the chaps of St. Tid, as run rather undersized and slight built, looked mere go-by-the-grounds seen alongside Master Billy. He was fond of sports too, and though Simon Keat could beat him at wrestling, none was so clever as the returned native in the water. There he properly shone,— salt or fresh 'twas all the same to him,— and the time being summer, Nanjulian went about to the swimming races, where they was held, and made a great show. And sometimes Julitta would go along with him and, liking him very well by now, was pleased to hear the people praise his cleverness. And once the man won an electro teapot and begged her to take it for a keepsake; which she did do.

Of course Simon Keat marked what was doing; but by a curious accident he didn't take it near so serious as the case required, for he set too much store by Julitta's sense, and, sizing up the real character of Billy Nanjulian pretty clever, thought, of course, that the widow had done the same. And that's where he made

a big mistake, because, witty though she may be, and a judge of character too, no woman looks at a man same as a man looks at a man. Nature prevents that; and when you add the complication that Billy was mad in love with her and she knew it, then it's plain to see Julitta couldn't regard him with the same critical sort of view that Simon did, or anybody else.

While Keat, therefore, seeing that Billy was a windy chap without much behind his big voice and big talk, doubted not that clever Julitta had come to the same conclusion, the truth was that she had not. She was a good bit attracted to the stranger; and she liked what she heard about Pennsylvania; and she wasn't sure but what she agreed with him when he told her that she was a head and shoulders too fine a piece to waste her cleverness and beauty in a one-horse hole like St. Tid. He had large views about money too, which rather impressed Julitta, and when he offered for her he said that there was pretty well no limit to his earning powers, and swore that with him to make the dollars and her to save them, there was little doubt that a very great future awaited the pair of 'em in America. For offer he did, after he'd been home two months; and she said no, but doubtful like, with a pretty good loophole for him to try again.

And then it was that old Jimmy Nute, who liked Simon Keat and much wanted for Julitta, his god-daughter, to take him, rated the man pretty strongly for holding back and hanging fire in the face of danger.

" Jimmery," said old Nute, " this here Bull of Bashan

from foreign parts will properly undo you, Simon, if you waste more time about it. The woman's took by him, and if she's not keeping company with the noisy fellow, 'tis the next thing to it. And properly sorry I'd be to see that happen. And, so like as not, all your own stupid fault for holding off it if it does."

"Billy Nanjulian! She couldn't do it, Jimmy," says Simon.

"And why for couldn't she?" axes old Nute. "Women be cruel clever at doing the things men say they can't do; and for all her brains, she's caught by the showy creature, and 'tis your business to go ahead afore Billy lands her. There's not a day to lose, and 'tis touch and go in my opinion, if you're not too late a'ready."

Simon was fairly scared at that, be sure. "I was waiting for my birthday to come round," he said.

"Waiting for your grandmother to come round!" answered the ancient man, who had a wonderful store of fire for three score and ten. "You wait no more, or you'll wait forever. The School Treat's tomorrow, and all the children are going to be took to King Arthur's Castle, at Tintagel; so you go too, and run her to earth as best you can. And don't take no for an answer, else I'll never speak to you no more — nor her either!"

"I be going," confessed Simon. "Me and a good few men from our chapel are going to look after the boys."

"You look after my goddaugther," advised Jimmy Nute, "and if the big fellow comes to queer your pitch,

give him a proper Cornish hug. Don't you stand no nonsense from him, nor yet from Julitta. Be a man afore her!"

For a modest chap, such as Simon Keat, the prospect looked very unpleasant. 'Twas a great shock to hear that Julitta felt a liking for Billy; but of course he didn't blame her, and doubted not that the stranger's big talk about the States had rather deceived Mrs. Bunt as to his true character. Anyway, he ordained to follow Jimmy's advice and lose no more time.

The United Methodists had their School Treat next day, and Simon, with a lot of other grown-up members, made holiday to help give the young 'uns a bit of fun. Julitta was taking Betsy, he knew, and he laid himself out to get in the same two-horse brake with them, when the start was made from St. Tid. But he failed there. And what was worse than the failure followed immediately; for he found that Billy Nanjulian was coming. Among Billy's other gifts was a pretty touch on the cornet. He was a great musicker in fact, and he sat alongside the driver of Julitta's brake and from time to time played American music that made the feet of the children properly tingle to be dancing. And Julitta, from under her eyelashes, admired the back of his head no doubt.

The School Treat, simply regarded as such, was a very great success; but the event itself was of course quite swallowed up and forgotten by the far-famed thing what happened at it.

Tintagel is a very fine spot, and the ruins of King

Arthur's Castle still rise up on a bluff for all the world to see. The land runs out into a knob over the ocean, with hugeous precipices roundabout, and part of the castle stands here — just a door and a window or two, and broken-down walls all covered with stone-crops and the like. And foxgloves grow bravely there, and the sheep browse on the parlous places at cliff edge, and the seagulls build their nests in crannies and on the ledges of the cliffs. You'll see a red-legged Cornish chough there too sometimes; though that fine bird be grown terrible scarce of late. 'Tis like a slim, well made crow, with scarlet beak and legs, and there's an old, fond tale as says how King Arthur was turned into one when he died — not that I hold with nonsense like that being told to the young people; though nowadays, of course, they wouldn't believe it.

A fine afternoon they had for their fun, and the sea being smooth as glass, which it seldom is on these savage shores, a few boats put out, and to add to their pleasure a lot of boys and girls went out fishing, to see if they could catch a pollack or two. Then, after the great business of tea, Simon Keat, who had eyes for one alone, saw the folk scatter, and marked where Julitta, wandering aside with her little one, had crossed the steep place to King Arthur's Castle. He saw them again presently on the top of the grassy down above the ruins; and he knew it was them because, though Julitta looked like anybody else at that distance, her little Betsy, in a bright, scarlet frock, could be seen for a mile.

With that, his work done for a moment, Keat started the boys playing cricket, and then slipped off after

Julitta. The day and the time didn't seem to him overmuch suited to such a delicate piece of work; but he'd got Jimmy Nute's warning ringing in his ears, and so he took his chance and delayed no more.

But the fact was, as came out after, that Julitta had gone to a lonely spot on t'other side of King Arthur's Head to be out of sight of the land and to meet somebody else. 'Twas Billy Nanjulian's idea, and he'd bade her slip off that way and promised to follow after. A lew corner she found, and watched the sun begin to come down to the sea, while Betsy picked the purple sea lavender as grew there and made a little nosegay of flowers and gulls' feathers for her mother.

Julitta knew what was coming, and this time she intended to say yes. Deep in thought she was, with the great, shining sea spread afore her and the music of the birds and the glory of the evening catching fire from the sun. And then she heard a man's footstep just behind the stone where she sat, and lifted her head, and smiled, and saw — Simon!

He was there only ten minutes before Billy; but ten minutes proved quite long enough to do his business.

'Twas like old times, and when she refused him gently, it seemed to Simon as if the years had rolled back and it was his twenty-second birthday again. She respected him something wonderful, and was always going to be a friend to him in the future, as she had been in the past, and so on. But she felt, taking it all round, that he wasn't the husband for her, and was sure she'd never make him half so happy as he deserved to be. A bit more to the same purpose she said. In fact, she talked

more about it than Simon did. He only listened with his mouth open.

And then came along the conquering hero and told Simon very pleasantly that two was company and three none; and Simon, a man of amazing self-possession, took it very quiet, and was just going off with his tail between his legs, when that happened to stay his steps.

Keat had got his back turned and was slouching away, and Billy had just axed Julitta if she knew what he was going to tell her, when a sound louder than the seagulls struck her ears, and the mother knew what it meant if the men did not.

"'Tis Betsy!" she screamed out. "Oh, my God! she's over the cliff!"

And true it was. Along of her own affairs, Julitta had forgot all about the little one, and, seeing her red frock a minute before close at hand, forgot how far a child can go in half a minute. The three of them rushed down a steep place, and then the men went over a ledge or two and the woman scrambled after them. The gulls properly shouted at 'em and swung about across their ears very near close enough to touch 'em with their wings; and some of the birds laughed, as sea birds will, and it sounded as if they was laughing at their trouble. For forty feet and more below, down in the green water, like a red poppy in a cornfield, was the babby.

"Thank God 'tis you!" said Simon to t'other man. "'Tis a Providence you was sent!"

He thought Billy would be in the water afore he could

finish speaking; but he thought wrong. 'Twas neck or nothing, of course, and a good chance of death for any man to dive down; but that had not struck Simon. It didn't miss Billy, however — doubtless because he was far cleverer in the sea than the other man.

"'Tis a million to one she's dead," he said, and then he turned so white as a dog's tooth. "'Tis no use losing two lives for one. I'll run round to the boats. 'Tis the only chance. No man could go over there and live!"

Of course such a clever chap was quite right, and Simon ought to have took his word for it. But there was the blessed child sinking and the mother screaming fit to split the cliffs, and, what with one thing and another, before Billy had gone ten yards on his errand of mercy, young Keat took off his coat and his shoes and went over.

'Twas a fearful drop for a full-grown man; but he kept his wits, and hit the water with his hands well together over his head. And Julitta saw him sink like a stone not three yards from her child — and she always said after that her hair began to grow grey between the time that Simon went under and the time he come up again. She thought he'd struck the bottom and stopped there; but up he rose presently, like a cormorant, five yards from where he went in, and blew the water from his lips and shook his head and saw the child and got to her. Meantime Master Billy, a bit surprised to find that Keat wasn't at his shoulder, did a very fine bit of running indeed, and when he got to the beach under the castle he did a fine bit of rowing also

and properly knocked the wind out of a sailorman that helped him. Fifteen minutes it was from the time that Betsy tumbled over the cliff to the time the boat came alongside her — time enough for a babby to drown thrice over. She was quickly took out of Simon's arms and put into the boat. And then Simon was pulled in himself; for he'd had to keep afloat all the time, because there was no landing place; only deep water to the foot of the great, dawn-facing cliffs.

And all Simon said, when he catched his wind, was to bellow up to Julitta, "The little child's alive!"

And the boatman said, "Thank God the sea was smooth, else you'd have been broke to mincemeat against the rocks."

And Billy didn't say nothing at all — a very unusual thing for him to do. The child was insensible; but she lived and got over it. They emptied the water out of her, and the sailor worked at her, and she came to afore they landed. And she knew her mother when Julitta got her arms round her.

Providence is stronger than us, you see, and 'twas no good Billy planning to wed Julitta after Providence had meant for Simon to do so. And I'm sure nobody but Providence could have thought of such a way to head off that pushing man. Indeed, Billy weren't done with yet, and two days later, when Betsy was out of danger and amazing little the worse for her fearful shock, Nanjulian went into Mrs. Bunt's so bold as brass with a fine new toy for the child.

He hadn't seen her since the adventure, and she'd

never thanked him for all he'd done, and she didn't even now; for women be very unreasoning toads, especially where their childer's concerned. She forgot all Nanjulian's trouble, I do believe, and just because he wouldn't go over the cliff at danger of his precious life, her opinions entirely changed about the man.

"Now we'll start where we left off when Betsy had her adventure," began Billy, cheerful as ever.

"And Simon Keat risked his life for her," said Julitta, "and you turned white."

"That's as may be," began William, little liking her tone of voice; but she saved him further doubts.

"You'd best to hear my news first," she said. "You're a very fine swimmer, Mr. Nanjulian, and have won a score of prizes; but the prize that Simon Keat won was more to me than your plated teapot. And 'tis there wrapped up in paper for you. I'm going to ask you to take it back again, because I shan't have no use for it now. 'Twould choke me to drink out of it, I believe. And I'm going to marry Simon. And I stepped over to his house and told him so this morning before he went to work. He wished it, and one good turn deserves another, and 'tis the very least I can do, in my opinion."

So that dashing Billy was disappointed in love once more.

Old Jimmy Nute declared himself terrible pleased about it. "I told you to be a man afore her, and you was," he said to Simon, "and she knew a man when she saw one; so you got her."

Keat also had his little joke over Billy Nanjulian in

after years. "A mighty fine hero, sure enough, and a much greater swimmer than me of course; but he couldn't dive so well, could he, Julitta?"

Mrs. Keat had three children, all boys; but I do believe, and so did she, that her husband was just as fond of her first.

"And well I may be," he'd say to his wife; "for if there'd been no Betsy for you, there'd have been no Julitta for me."

THE LIE TO THE DEAD

We was sifting sense and exchanging our opinions at "The One and All" public-house, kept by Richard Male; and, according to the custom of St. Tid, we differed a good bit about deep questions and the right way and the wrong way to read 'em.

Sidney Nosworthy, second foreman at the slate quarries, started, as usual, on one of them tricky problems, so easy to solve at first sight and such a puzzler when you fairly tackle it. He was great for putting posers to the company, having a quick mind and a very romantic disposition. And he could sing, along with his other gifts; but as a local preacher he wasn't in the first flight. He'd start very clever, but one thing always led to another with Sidney, when he was preaching, and he'd go off, like a feather in a gale of wind, and pile words on words until the idea he started out with was properly lost under the mass of 'em. Then he'd try back, and hunt about and get messed up, though all in beautiful language; but no more use to the soul than cheese-cakes to a pig. Not but what his doctrine was sound. In all his flights he never said anything he didn't ought; but there was nothing to it, if you understand me. 'Twas like starting to let down a glass of ale and finding a tumbler of froth.

Often, however, he'd start solider men on the track of a notion, and sometimes his questions would lead to

a good tale, or put one of our older members in mind of something worth repeating. And so it was on this particular night, for when Sidney raised a nice point, it minded me how the very same kicklish question had come before me in a critical case, and what I'd done about it.

"There's lots of questions in this world that can only be answered in the next," so Nosworthy was saying, and old Moses Bunt, who always contradicted him on principle, and everybody else, too, for that matter, denied it.

"There's no question ever comes up an understanding human can't answer," he replied; "and because you see a lot of things happen to puzzle you, it don't follow that a bald-headed old ancient man, like me, would be puzzled.

"Because you wouldn't have enough brains to understand the question," answered Sidney, who much disliked old Bunt. "No doubt you'd answer it. You're the sort would always think you knew. But would you answer right? Look here, now: be it ever proper to break your promise to the dead? That's what I want to know; and don't you think, because it looks so mighty easy, that it is."

"If it ain't easy, then you're no Christian," retorted Bunt upon Sidney. "For my part I never heard anything easier, and the man who can be in doubt about it idden no friend of mine."

"Not that I ever heard anybody ever wanted to be," answered Nosworthy, who was far too quick of tongue for Moses. "But since it's so terrible easy, perhaps

you'll give us the answer, and see if we be all of one mind about it."

"The answer is," declared Bunt, holding out his pint pot for Richard Male to fill again — "the answer is 'No.' Never under any manner of chances, no matter what the size of 'em, did a mortal man ought to lie to the dead."

I listened and said nought, while they all agreed with Moses, except Nosworthy. He didn't disagree, neither, but wouldn't let it go at that.

"You may be in the right," he allowed, "but there's a lot might happen, and we know that the spirit often conflicts with the letter and the letter with the spirit."

But Moses wouldn't hear it.

"A lie's a lie," he said, "and a lie to them in their graves be the wickedest, cowardest sort of lie. No fay — nothing ever could happen to make it right. And him as told such a lie would go haunted to his own grave without a doubt."

'Twas just candle-teening, I remember, and Richard Male struck a light as I spoke.

"I'm with Sidney," I said, "and I'm as old as you, Moses, so you may take it I don't differ for the sake of differing. There's times," I said, "when it might be in seemly good reason to break your promise to a dead man; and I don't say it lightly, for it happened to me, and so you may be sure I've had to face the trouble in a way none of you chaps ever had, or ever be likely to have."

They was terrible interested, for I'm a silent member, as a rule, and would sooner list than tell.

Then Nosworthy said one of the cleverest things that ever he did say.

"To break a promise might be the best way to keep it sometimes," he declared, and all the other men thought he was only talking foolishness; but with my experience behind me, I knew 'twas a very deep saying.

'Twas a bit backalong and beyond the memory of most of 'em; but Moses Bunt remembered the parties, and when I named Benjamin Nute, a scornful expression came in his countenance.

"That antic," he said. "Who wants to hear tell about him?"

He'd been a quarryman, Ben had — one of the rockmen, as we call 'em — and his work had took him down into the pit. He served the drill very clever; but not the air-drill which is in use nowadays. In Ben's time it was all hand work, and he'd make the holes for gunpowder or dynamite, as the need happened to be, and always knew by a sort of instinct where to put 'em. He was ever the last to run from the lighted fuse, when the whistle went for a blasting, and he took a bit of risk, too, sometimes — to put a little salt in his life, as he said. For he was a man much like Nosworthy in a fashion, and had ideas beyond quarrying, and felt a pleasure in bud-break and the fall of the leaf, and other such-like everyday things, that most folk don't heed more than a cow heeds the rain.

Then came salt into Ben's life with a vengeance — and pepper and mustard, too. And they took the usual shape, for the thing that be sure to hit that dreamy, fanciful sort of chap sooner or later is a female; and a

girl it was that taught Master Ben how life had something in it more exciting than gunpowder, or even dynamite. They be poor explosives, after all, compared to the "weaker sex," as some joker have called 'em; and, for that matter, women varies in their powers of a bust-up just so much as black powder and nitroglycerine, or that terror by the name of cordite. For the powder heaves gently, and the dynamite scats all abroad like the lightning, and the cordite properly puts the house out of windows and shakes a man to his boot-soles and turns the cliff-face into dust.

Janet she was called, one of the Parsons family, and she had two brothers rock-men, and her father was in the dressing-sheds — a slate-splitter and a very clever man. They were a fiery race, dark-haired and red-faced, and good chapel people, save Janet, who always minched when she could. But she loved singing, and was a great loss to the chapel choir. Like a bird she could trill; but hadn't no use for Wesley's hymns, more shame to her. She properly beat her family and went her own way, and was a lazy, lovely good-for-nothing. Vain, too. She'd frape herself in at the waist like a wasp, and crimp her hair and read story-books; but no wickedness was in her — only foolishness. Her father, Harry Parsons, spoiled her from the cradle and never chid her, so it wasn't her fault altogether. Her mother was dead, and she looked after her father and brothers.

Then she got acquainted with Ben Nute. There was a field where a bull was wont to run down under Melrose, which be a part of St. Tid, and Ben he often went

that way and crossed the field, just for the salt of the thing. And once the bull was there and pressed him hard; but he escaped. Then, passing that way, in a mild hope the creature might be round-about, he met a girl fleeing to him in a proper terror with the bull behind her. But Ben kept his wits, and bade her run for her life, and got between her and the bull; and then Nute ran t'other way and put Bulley in two minds, and by the time he'd decided and was off with his head down after the girl again, she'd got to the hedge and scrambled through it.

Ben saw her home after that, and, being very well known to her brothers as a good sort, they asked him to tea come Sunday; and he went.

It began like that, and in a month, or six weeks, him and Janet was walking out. Not tokened, of course, nor nothing like that, but just to size each other up and see what they thought of one another's ideas.

I wouldn't say 'twas all one way by any means, for she liked him a lot from the first, and though the poetry in the man puzzled her, she thought it rather fine; and she liked a lot else about him, including his dark eyes and deep voice. Besides, he was given to doubting accepted things, and disinclined to believe a plan was right just because it had been followed for hundreds of years. A bit of a rebel, in fact, and that alone drew Janet. She loved to hear him laugh at the accepted order of creation at St. Tid, and, finding she wasn't bound down to things as they were, he opened out a bit and fairly astonished her with his opinions, for he was a man of gentle nature. But he frightened her

also, and when she told her father how terrible bold Ben Nute could be, the man was properly shocked, and advised Janet to steer clear of such a rash and reckless thinker. So she kept her mouth shut after that; and then Ben, who was chin-deep in love by now, offered himself and proposed marriage, and said that if she'd come and live along with him and his old mother, she'd never repent it. Janet didn't want no old mothers, however; but, of course, she couldn't say so, and as Mrs. Nute was a very ailing woman and might drop any time, she didn't let that stand in the way for the moment. She'd got conditions to put, but felt it wasn't the time, besides being perfectly sure he'd fall in with them when she liked to name them. And so, loving the man very well for the minute, she took him, and he said, "Glory be!" and walked on air.

Ben certainly did love her with all his heart, and she knew it, and doubted not she'd be able to twist him round her finger as easily as her wedding-ring when the time came.

But it never did, and the path of his true love ran skew from the start. He'd hardly got Janet afore he lost her again, and that in a very unexpected fashion. For when it came to the conditions, much to her surprise and mine, for that matter — because I was his friend and knew his secrets — he couldn't see his way.

She asked for a thing you might have thought, knowing Ben, he'd have found as easy as splitting slate; and yet, such is the contrariness of human nature, he wouldn't agree, for all his love. My own impression is that it were less the thing than Janet's manner of

asking for it; and yet, again, that's doubtful, too, for you'd never have thought he could have denied her. It showed guiding strings deep down in his nature and an instinct that was stronger than his love. In a word, she wanted Ben to promise he'd up stick and away from St. Tid the minute his mother was teeled.[1]

"You'll be so glad to go as me, I reckon," she told the man. "I'm sick to death of this stuffy hole, and want to go to America. There's more Cornishmen in Pennsylvania slate quarries than at St. Tid nowadays, and I'm for America — so you've got to promise to chuck St. Tid. You'll have a bit of cash when your mother dies, I suppose, so there you are; and I've a right to ax it and I do ax it."

He allowed she'd a right to ax, and added that he'd a right to refuse; but this she didn't see, and I believe from the very first minute, she felt he was not going to do her bidding in that particular. They talked for and against for a week, and then Janet put it to her father, and he sided with Ben. She'd told Mr. Parsons and her brothers that, if they'd got a bit of pluck, they'd come too; but her father was well up at St. Tid, and Ben himself stood to be under-foreman in five years, so they was both against her, and though her brothers were willing enough to go, she couldn't go without a husband.

Then she turned nasty.

"You're a silly old buffle-head," she said to Ben. "We can't all bide here for ever, like mites in a cheese,

[1] *Teeled.* Buried.

and if I'd known you were so mean-spirited, I'd never have taken you — no fay, I wouldn't."

"Use your sense," he answered. "You be the wittiest woman in St. Tid, and I can't believe my ears to hear you telling so foolish."

He was patience made alive with her, for he loved the ground she walked upon; but he felt, with his position and prospects, it would be a great mistake to leave St. Tid for her sake. But she wouldn't hear him, and took a very scornful line indeed, and ridiculed him for a stay-at-home gawk, with no more sense than a silly school-girl. Then his pride and his love clashed a bit, and afore one had got the bettermost of the other, a startling thing happened. They'd had another long wrangle, and when he came into my cottage a few days later, I could see he was pretty well beat about it. He axed my advice — a thing no sensible man offers to lovers any more than he would to married people — but I felt a bit hot for him, because the girl had been calling him rude names and showing a very unamiable temper, and so I said that, if he wanted my view, he could have it.

"You've got your self-respect, I believe, Ben," I said, "and there's few things be worse to lose, especially for a married man. Don't you stand it, and don't you hear no more about it. If she's going to put her fun and love of gadding before your welfare and her future prosperity, then she's a fool. You take my tip and hold off her altogether for a month, and let her silly head cool, and let her see what life's like without you.

And then, when next you go walking, and she begins on it again — but there, she won't. She'll know, if you hold off, you're niffed [1] and she'll be sorry, and tread a bit softer in future."

"'Tis as much for her sake I'm firm as for my own," explained poor Ben. "I'm thinking of her future, and I'll never go so high in a new place as I shall here; besides, money don't run half so far out there. All the chaps that come back will tell you that."

He talked sensible, but did the other thing. He started to take my advice, and it played the very mischief with him, which I'll own, for after he'd kept away from her for a week, he was fairly dying of love for the girl, and the experiment was hurting him a lot worse than her. It made him lose his self-respect, which was just what I wanted to save for him, and it made her properly wicked. In fact, her love was a pretty poor sample, in my opinion, and didn't stand the strain he put on it. He stuck to it for a fortnight, and then called on me late one evening; in a fearful frame of mind he was, with perspiration fairly streaming down his face and his heart broken.

"It's all over," he said. "I've done it now."

"Begin at the beginning," I answered, "and take a dollop of spirits afore you start. You'm wisht as a winnard, and your eyes be bulging."

"I've seen her. I've just left her. I've told her I can't live like this no more, and that 'tis living death without her. I've thrown it up and promised to go to

[1] *Niffed.* Vexed.

the ends of the earth, if she likes, as soon as my mother's dead."

"Aw jimmery!" I said. "You'll make a bally-muck of married life if you do that, Ben."

"No, I shan't," he said; "but I'll make a bally-muck of single life. I shan't be wedded now."

"Not wedded!" I cried out.

"Everything be scat abroad now," he went on, and the tears were streaming down his face. "She just turned round — 'twas outside the churchyard I met her — she turned round and said I'd comed to my senses too late, and I didn't suppose as she'd bided to be a laughing-stock till I cared to speak to her again. 'You poor chitter-faced thing,' she said, 'do 'e think I've been waiting with my 'ankercher to my eyes for you to mend your beastly manners? Not me — I ain't that sort. I'm tokened to Tom Retallack — that's what I am — a man whose boots you bain't worthy to black. And never you speak to me no more, because I won't have it!' So there it is, and my life's ruined."

"Tom Retallack!" I said. "Why he's no older than her, and be so poor as a beetle. She started walking out with him a year ago, and her father stopped it the minute he heard of it."

Then I told Ben to keep up his pecker, and offered to take forty shillings or a month out of Tom myself — just for friendship; but somehow he knowed it was all up from the first, and time proved he was right. The woman was like a vixen, and not her father nor anybody would make her budge. She stuck to Retallack and went her way, though she calmed down in a month, and

sought out Ben and axed his forgiveness, which he granted. But she didn't throw Tom over, and there was nothing more to say about it. A curious case of a woman doing a thing in a passion and sticking to the consequences when she was cool again. She told me, long after, that it was all for the best, because she'd always liked Tom, and reckoned his nature was better suited to her own than Ben's.

"I should always have bullied Ben," she confessed. "He's built for some one to bully; and that would have made a lot of trouble, and he'd have hated me in course of time."

'Twas easy to arrange it all like that; but Ben never, never got over it, and was a changed man from that day. He went about as though he'd had an accident and broken himself up, and so he had — where he couldn't be mended; for to his dying hour his love for that woman didn't waver. He'd made a picture of her in his heart, and time couldn't wipe it out or put another there.

They was all friends again in six months, and, of course, Tom Retallack promised Janet that, when the time came, he'd be up and away with her to America. But it was a safe thing to promise, because well he knew the time never would come. He only earned eighteen bob a week, and it looked as though the pair of 'em would be grey-headed afore ever he'd get enough to put a roof over her head, let alone fly across the sea.

But Janet trusted to time, and told Ben one day — the day he buried his mother, it was, and a great rally of neighbours beside the grave — that she'd never given

up the hope and the longing to go abroad and see the world. And he was gentle with her, and said that for her sake he hoped it would happen some day. Because they'd got to be quite good friends, and he could bear to talk to her and see her along with Retallack. They'd even got so far that she would beg him to look round and find a maiden to share his home now his mother was gone. But he'd smile at her, and thank her for the good advice, and say there was none born could ever do that.

A few months later happened a nine days' wonder, and Tom Retallack fell in with his famous windfall. Just the most amazing come-by-chance that ever was heard tell about, and a thing that even got into the newspapers — as well it might. A Bank Holiday 'twas, and him and Janet took their food and tramped to Brown-Willy — the great tor that you see rising up over the Cornish moors to the east of St. Tid. A fine place, sure enough, and good for a holiday and a breath of air, but desolate as sin — the home of the fox and the hawk. Yet in that barren place if Retallack didn't come by his money! 'Twas after him and Janet had ate their food and was playing about, and she was picking whortleberries and he was smoking his pipe, when he seed a little tin box, rusty and battered, 'pon top of a boulder. He flung stones at it to knock it down, and presently he did so, and the box fell twenty feet into the green grass under, and seat open when it struck the turf. 'Twas full of white paper, and when they come to look, they found the paper was money! All good Bank of England notes, and the girl counted 'em, and

they stood for five hundred and fifteen pound! They thought they must be drunk or dreaming, but there weren't no mistake — 'twas real live cash, and they took it home and built pretty castles in the air as they went, no doubt. But when the time came, and they'd got used to it, Tom, being a very straight man, advertised the find and doubted not that the owner would come forward and the queer thing be explained. The only question in his mind was how much he'd be likely to get for the recovery. But nought happened and none came forward; so, after leaving it at that for three months, it looked as though all was right, and Retallack might fairly claim the money. Which he did do, naturally, and everybody wished him joy of it, and we had a good few free drinks along with the man, you may be sure.

Then, come winter, he wedded, and Ben and me was at the wedding with a good few other friends. And Tom Retallack took his wife away to America — to the quarries in Pennsylvania — and we heard little more about 'em for five years. But from time to time came a letter from the woman to her father. She bore children, and weren't none too happy, by all accounts. Nothing to catch hold of, but it read as if her and her husband didn't always see alike. He'd got work, but nothing wonderful, and it began to look presently as if the pair of 'em was homesick, and might return to St. Tid afore they was much older.

Then we lost Ben Nute. He was struck down by an empty tumbril running fast from the top of the hill to the pit. He'd got his back to it, and was standing in

the line dreaming, and didn't hear the warning. The poor chap had his pin-bone [1] broke, and a good few of his ribs, and his left arm. 'Twas a pretty hopeless case from the first, and I don't think he much wanted to get over it, for he'd have been a crooked cripple to his dying day if he'd lived. Anyhow, he made no fight to live, and sank away and perished ten days after his fatal smash.

We was all terrible sorry, and the quarry fairly turned out to the burying, and we lined the grave with moss and daffadowndillies for the man. So he went in along with his mother, and his place knew him no more. I never lost a better friend or a kinder neighbour.

Then — a year after, it might have been — the Retallacks came home, with three very nice little children. But there was a cloud had come up between them, owing to differences of nature, and though Tom got work and was taken on again, and found a cottage to suit him and all, yet it weren't a happy home, and he said to me more than once that he wished he'd bided out to America and let Janet return with her little ones. And she'd talk to me, too, and often wish her cake was dough again and she a maiden still. They'd make me listen to their secrets, though little I wanted to do so, and I took a lot of interest in 'em for their own sakes as well as for the sake of a dead man. It seemed to me there was no very deep difference between 'em; but they jarred on each other over the children more than anything, and the right and wrong way to bring

[1] *Pin-bone.* Thigh-bone.

'em up. And the eldest, he was called Ben, after Nute, who'd stood gossip to him; because, differ as they might, neither Tom nor Janet ever spoke his name without kindness.

So there it was, and after they'd been back in Delabole a year, it might be, the crash came, and Tom dropped in upon me one fine night and told me he was off.

"Can't stand no more," he said. "It be telling on my nerve, and a quarryman's no good to nobody without that. I'm going to leave my wife — it's all over bar shouting. She'll have my money and not my company, and all's for the best. I'm cruel sorry about it, and she's a lot put about; but I've threatened too often, and now I'm going to perform. I shall seek work at Penrhyn in Wales, so as not to be too far off my childer; but if it's not to be got there, I go back to the States."

Well, I was properly shocked and much troubled to know how far things had drifted; and just then, just while I was talking sense to the man, in came his wife with the same story, not knowing he was along with me.

And then, neighbours, it all came over me in a flash, and I lied to the dead.

I dare say your quick wits can put the rest of the tale together very suent; but, of course, they'd never guessed it, and no more had any other mortal. For pure love of the girl, Ben Nute had played his little trick, and, after his mother died, had planned to give her the money that then belonged to him. He couldn't just hand it over, of course, for she'd never have took it; but he cudgelled his brains, and finally hit on the thought to

stick it under the eyes of the man, or woman, on some occasion when and where they was bound to see. And so, after he knew where they was off that Bank Holiday, he overgot 'em, and reached the tor afore they did, and put his old box and his money where they wasn't likely to miss it. It might have bided in that horny-winky spot half a year without any eye but a raven's seeing it; so, to make all safe, Ben himself hid not far distant till he marked that all was right; then he sloped off home unseen and unguessed. And he told me the story, and made me swear that not on my very death-bed would I ever tell it again to mortal ear.

And yet I broke that oath, and I'll always hold to it that a Voice louder than my own senses ordered me so to do. I told the pair of 'em how Ben Nute had plotted for 'em and planned for 'em to wed and to go where Janet willed; and how money was nothing to the lonely man, but that, knowing what it would be to them, he had gived it all up gladly for their happiness and welfare.

"And now," I said, "knowing that, I dare you — I properly dare you two to make his beautiful deed a thing of nought. For honour and love of that good chap, you can't break up all he planned for you. You've got to bide together and pull together — by God, you have! I've broke my oath," I said, "and I'm in my Maker's Hand; but I leave it to you to judge if such a far-reaching and dangerous thing as that is all to go in vain."

They didn't think much of me, however; they was far too much occupied with what Ben Nute had done.

"We was all surprised but me when he didn't die worth twopence," I said, "and now you two people know the reason; and you also know, I should hope, what to do about it. You've got to be reconciled for the memory of that proper man, and if you part now, knowing what I've told 'e, you ain't the creatures I've took 'e for."

They was hot-hearted, hot-headed things, and in the emotion of the moment I could see I'd got my way. Janet cried a bucket, and they went home together, and though I'm bound to say in cold blood the next morning I doubted if I'd not told my great lie to Ben Nute in vain, yet Him as made me tell it was wiser than us, and the story turned out as well as I could have wished. They saw it and they felt it; and though it seemed, perhaps, a far-away, dead thing to breed such a living result — there it was: it worked and held them together — the cement of a dead man's love.

That was the story I told in "The One and All," and Sidney Nosworthy, who started me, declared that I'd proved very clever how a lie might be justified even to the dead; but Moses Bunt and another here and there were far from convinced, and Moses said that to tell a dead man's secret for the sake of a pair of cranky fools, like they Retallacks, was not a thing he should ever forgive me, for one. And he never did.

So the question still remains to answer, though for my part, if it all happened over again tomorrow, I shouldn't do no different. I don't say it's right, and I don't say it's wrong; but I just say that's how I'd act — as we all must, according to our natures.

FARMER SLEEP'S SAVINGS

The Lord's hand goeth light here and heavy there, and His ways with man are full of mystery; for none can say why for He'll be gentle with the wicked and hard with the virtuous man, or why for He chastens them He loves best, or lets the famous sinner flourish like the green bay-tree in the sight of the nation. But this I know from my own amazing experience, that He tackles good and bad in one fashion only, and that idden according to human manners and customs, but because He can see the end from the beginning, and knows the manner of mind we be moulded in, and what firing each man and woman needs to make them useful crockery, so as they shall justify their existence in this world and save their souls in the next.

To look at me, an old chapel member and useful in the pulpit, a man well thought upon and known to be honest and patient and trustworthy, and a man ever ready to advise the young out of long experience, and a father of a grown family doing good work in the world — to look at me, Tobias Hawke of St. Tid, you'd think you saw an old chap as had been blessed with sense and religion and wise parents and a good disposition from his youth up; and yet if you thought so, you'd think as wrong as could be. For till I was one and twenty years of age I'd got no sense nor yet religion, but a proper wilful temper and a rebellious character, and

didn't care no more about doing my duty to my neighbour than a tom-cat does. Right down wicked, in fact. And as for my parents, they be underground now, and so enough said; but truth's truth, and it won't hurt 'em to tell it, and the truth is that my father spent half his time locked up for poaching or worse, and my poor mother, as might have been good with another sort of man, was wicked with father, and she lost her self-respect and went down hill, and died afore she was fifty along of being intemperate. She took to the bottle to drown her sorrows, poor woman, and, as often happens with females, the bottle soon drowned her. So the people said I had bad blood in me, which was true, and when they turned me out of the quarries for no fault but laziness and slackness, it looked as if I should have to wait longer than I wanted to get more work.

My mother was dead then, and my father happened to be going straight for the minute and making a sort of living doing a bit of fish jowstering, and he cussed me for losing my job proper, and said I was a disgrace to him and such like. But I took no 'count of him, because it was his way to be cruel virtuous between his lapses. What I had to do was to get work or go for an emigrant to Canada, and if it hadn't been for a girl by the name of Betty Bake — one of the Bakes of Newhall Mill — I dare say I should have gone. Only seventeen year old she was, but she and me were tokened on the quiet. Her mother never would have allowed it if she'd knowed; but she didn't know, and nobody knew, because Betty liked mystery, so we kept company in secret, and meant to marry some day and surprise St.

Tid. That couldn't be, however, till I'd scraped a bit of cash, and when I lost my quarry job, Betty pulled a face, and I was half afeared she'd throw me over. Terrible fond of money she was, and no more particular than me how she comed by it; and if there'd been any way at St. Tid for me to get a bit, little she'd have cared how I did. But there weren't no doubtful silver to be picked up in our church-town, for 'twas always a poor and God-fearing place, with more chapels than pubs in it. So, though I'd have done wrong for money just as soon as right in them evil days of my youth, there didn't seem none to tempt me, and I wore out a pair of boots looking for honest work, and at last I found some along with Farmer William Sleep of Lanteglos Meadows.

A hundred acres and no more the man had, but it was his own, and he made a bare living out of it, and after getting a fortnight's job in the hay-fields, and working harder than ever I worked before, and behaving so good as gold, you may say, to gain my own ends, I asked him to let me stop, and swore he'd never regret it if he did.

He was an old man, thin as a new-come woodcock, and rather bird-like himself, for that matter; for he had a pointed nose and a sloping brow and a bald head and a mouth like a slit in a money-box. An excitable, bird-witted sort of man. A suspicious chap, too, and wouldn't trust nobody. Easily scared off an opinion and prone to distrust his own judgment, and much given to fretting and grizzling and prophesying bad luck that never happened. And when some other old chap would laugh at him afterward, and point out how he'd worried

for naught, Farmer Sleep would say it was his undying custom to look on the dark side, because it was better not to be disappointed, and if things didn't fall out so bad as he feared, then he'd get a mite of comfort, which was all to the good. A widow-man he was, and thought to be harmless enough.

"Why for did they chuck you from the quarries?" he asked me when I begged to be took on regular.

"Because I didn't neighbour to the work, Master," I told him. "I was a rock man, and I hated it, and my heart weren't in it. But I'm properly fond of the land and very wishful to larn farming, for my nature goes out to it."

I discovered after that he'd been in two minds for a good bit about sacking his second man; and as he believed my yarn and liked the look of me, he took me on. He drove a pretty tight bargain for a start, but he said, if I was so good as my promises, he'd rise me after six months, so I left the room where I'd lodged in St. Tid with my mother's sister, and took up my quarters in a little dormer attic in the roof of Lanteglos Meadows Farm. And I worked hard, and soon found that the way to please old Sleep was to keep my mouth shut and stick to my job.

I didn't get much time to play about, but me and Betty met Sundays, and I was always on the lookout on the quiet to find something with more money to it and less work. After six months I got fifteen shilling a week, and after another six I got a pound, and when he gave it to me, farmer said I mustn't count on no more rises for a month o' Sundays and more, because things

were terrible tight and he'd had proper bad luck with his lambs. Which was true.

And Betty was getting a bit restive and wondering if we could wed on fifty-two pound a year, and I was half in a mind to try, when a bank broke, and I took to crooked ways and did evil in the sight of the Lord. The parties are all gone but me now, so I can tell the story, and seeing that I'm the villain of the tale and covered with confusion and shame, you might very well wonder how I care to do it. But I do it for conscience' sake, and for a lesson to the young men and maidens to go straight and fear their Maker.

'Twas Trebow and Trelissick's bank that broke — a private affair, held so safe as the Bank of England by folk in North Cornwall; and it hit a lot of poor people cruel hard and frightened the rest. And Trelissick got two years in prison, for 'twas proved he knew in good time what was coming and hadn't been straight; but Trebow was in his grave ten years before, so he was taken from the wrath to come.

Well, as I say, not only them that were hit, but them that escaped, found themselves in a rare flutter over this sad come-along-of-it, and nobody was in a greater terror than my master. He hadn't lost a penny, but he properly lost his nerve, and he declared most steadfast that when one broke, 'twas deathly certain you'd very soon hear a lot more would follow after.

"No more banks for me," he said. "I'll have my money where I know where to put my hands on it in future."

And the very next day he donned his market clothes

and went to Launceston, and come back presently with a very heavy hand-bag, what I had to carry for him from the station.

Then the silly old man had another fright, for no sooner was his cash safe hid somewhere — none knew where — than Orchard Farm, betwixt our place and St. Tid, was broke into by night, and a bit of money took, and some Sheffield plate.

It properly worried William Sleep, I do assure 'e; and if he'd had any hair left, I doubt it would have turned white with fear.

Mrs. Beale, our housekeeper at Lanteglos Meadows, spoke to me about it.

"He's between the dowl and the deep sea, poor soul," she said, "and his nerves be all over the place. For if he keeps his money, so like as not 'twill be stolen from him, for they thieves always smell it out; and if he puts it in a bank, the bank will be sure to break. So he's in a proper tantara; and that shows money's a cuss, whichever way you look at it, and the more cash the more worrit."

"How much might he have, ma'am?" I asked.

"He might have a million from the way it frets him," she told me. "But what 'tis I don't know and don't want to know."

Farmer fussed and fumed for two days and was always running up to his sleeping-room at all sorts of odd times; then a terrible queer thing happened, and my troubles and temptations began.

There weren't no blind to my window, and I was lying awake one night bothering about Betty Bake,

for we'd had words, when I see a light flash up against the ceiling over my head. The clock downstairs had just gone two, so that I knew no common thing was afoot, and as the light moved and disappeared, I went to my little window and looked out. 'Twas rainy, with a hidden moon, and I very clearly saw a man moving below, and thought as the burglar had found us at last. But in a minute I saw 'twas no burglar, but Farmer Sleep himself. He carried a lantern in one hand and a lump of something in t'other, and I saw him go across the farm-yard into a byre, where the hand tools was kept, and a minute later he came out with a spade. Then he stood and listened for half a minute, and then he went off by the lane to the orchard.

Of course I guessed very quick what he was up to, and the spirit of adventure got hold of me; so I pulled on my trousers and my coat and took my boots in my hand and slipped down-house and out. He'd shut the front door after him, but I went in the scullery and out o' the window as quiet as an owl. Then I got on my boots, and very soon was in the orchard. I stood still for a bit, and presently, a good ways off, heard the old man digging. So I crept forward on my hands and knees, and soon saw he was very busy under an old walnut-tree that stood in the corner of the orchard. There was a pile of "deads" and rubbish under the tree, as had been there time out of mind. 'Twas a corner no good for nothing, and us went there but once a year, when the walnuts was ripe, to beat the tree and gather 'em.

I watched, and didn't have to wait long, for the old

chap had soon dug a hole a yard into the rubbish-heap. And that done, he thrust in his parcel, and rammed it home with his foot, and made all same as it was before. He held up his lantern then to see that everything was suent, and evidently felt he'd done a mighty clever thing, for he gave a grunt, which he only did when he was pleased, and then he douted the lantern and crept back home. Not ten yards did he walk away from me; but I was lying curled up like a hedgehog, and silent as a stone, you may be sure.

I gave him a long start back and sat and thought a mighty good while as to what I should do next. God forgive me! 'twas no fear of wrong-doing that restrained me, but only wicked cunning to know how I could best get his savings and be off to safety.

I decided that I'd leave it for the minute and have a tell with my Betty; because in such a matter she'd be cleverer than me. And so when I reckoned farmer was safe to bed and asleep, I went back through the window and hitched it after me and crept up to my chamber so quiet as a beetle.

And the next Sunday I see Betty Bake and let her in the secret.

It came in the nick of time, you might say, for by signs and tokens I had got to see of late that my girl was properly tired of courting. I wouldn't say she was cooling off exactly, but I did know she began to grow a bit fretful and impatient with me. And once and again she threw the name of another chap at me, a man in the quarries who stood pretty high, and was likely to get a still better job afore long. Teddy Lobb was

his name, and after she'd mentioned him once or twice, I got nasty and told her I didn't want to hear no more on that score and reminded her of a thing or two she'd forgot. We came in sight of a quarrel, in fact, and so I was very glad the next time we met to distract her mind with the tale about Farmer Sleep's savings.

Betty was terrible interested and said, wicked creature, that no doubt 'twas my lucky star had kept me awake that night and not her sharp tongue, as I thought. And she didn't advise me to take the money; she ordered me to do it.

"There's hundreds so like as not," she said; "and all us have got to do is to help ourselves. There's no power on earth will ever guess 'twas you, and very like when he goes that way and sees the rubbish-heap all right, he'll not seek the stuff till we've took it beyond his reach for evermore."

For plotting you never saw that girl's equal! Her mind moved as quick as thought, and she planned it all and worked out the details that clever you'd have thought she'd been doing such like sinful crimes all her life.

Farmer went to Launceston market every second Saturday, and he was due to be off three days from that time, so 'twas settled on that afternoon, if the coast was clear, I would see what he had put away in his box, and hide it careful somewheres else till I'd told Betty about it.

And that was what I did do, for the place was lonesome as the top of Brown Willy, and I picked my way, so as not to bruise a nettle, and got to the rubbish-

heap, and soon fetched out the treasure with naught but a blackbird on a bough to see me do it. A heavy box it was that opened with a hasp, and in half a minute it lay open in my lap, and I see more money than ever I'd see before. Two hundred pounds, and ten was in the box, and half was in gold, and half in five-pound notes. I properly gasped, but knew it was a time to keep my nerve well in hand, and so in ten minutes or less I'd made the place look same as it did before to a dead stick. And the box I wrapped up very careful in a newspaper and put it under my arm and went my way to a little wood not fifty yard from the high road to Camelford. And there I hid the stuff in a drain-pipe, where I could find it in the dark, if need be.

My brain properly reeled after that, but the feeling soon wore off, and I kept saying to myself, "You be worth two hundred and ten pounds, Toby Hawke, and the world's yours to conquer!"

Farmer Sleep was home by supper-time in a very cheerful frame of mind. He'd sold a score of sheep to great advantage, and he'd had an extra drop on the strength of it and seemed wonderful pleased with himself, which was a bit unusual. But the next morning the drink got home on him, and he'd changed his tune; so I felt glad 'twas Sunday and but little work calling to be done. I guessed that he might have a look to his money during the day, but it didn't seem very likely he'd do it till nightfall, and, anyway, there weren't no danger for me; so I went to see Betty Bake as usual and brought her the glad news. And she was

proper pleased, and full of plots in a minute. Her great idea was to cut and run for it.

"With a dollop of money like that," she said, "there's nothing beyond our power. And we'll go to Liverpool and sail to America or Canada, where you can take up a bit of land and get out of this stuffy hole; for I'm sick to death of it and want to live in a larger world. And if we can slip it pretty quick and get clear afore he gets to his money-box again, so much the better."

As to my giving a month's warning, she wouldn't hear of it.

"If not tonight, then tomorrow night," she said, "and not a day later. We'll catch the early morning train to Okehampton, and then get to Exeter, and change there for Bristol, and change to Bristol for Liverpool, and then be on the way to foreign parts the first moment we can."

She'd thought it all out, you see, and when I reminded her we weren't married, she said that didn't matter a button, and we'd be brother and sister till we got to America and then get married there. I couldn't but admire her cleverness, and afore we parted 'twas all settled that o' Monday night I should meet her at a cross-roads not far from where the money was hid, and we'd tramp it to Camelford and pick up the workmen's train. It looked good, and any doubt I might have felt was soon swept away by her confidence and pluck. For a maiden not eighteen I reckon she was the hardest piece of goods you might have found in Cornwall, and I was filled with admiration at her; but

if she amazed me then, 'twas nothing like what she did after.

Farmer Sleep weren't home to supper, for he spent Sunday in St. Tid as a rule, and we was gone to bed afore he came home. And somehow I fancied that he'd go out to his treasure that night, so I kept awake till the small hours, expecting to see his light on my ceiling and mark him sneak off to the orchard; but he didn't stir, and with light I went to sleep, and slept that sound that the head-man, Sam Nute, came up over the stairs to call me.

Farmer laughed at me for a sluggard and said he'd take an alarm-clock out of my wages if I was late again. He'd got over his extra drop of whisky by now, and talked as usual, and, to my amazement, he spoke of his savings. To Sam he spoke, for he thought a lot of Sam, as had been with him ten year; but I couldn't help hearing while I ate my breakfast.

"No more trouble with my money now, Nute," he said. "'Tis safe at last, and a great weight off my mind."

"Very glad of it," answered Samuel, "for 'twas on your nerves a lot."

"It was," confessed farmer; "but I've made a bit of an experiment since I drawed it out of the bank, and the experiment have been very successful. I hid half my cash in a mighty snug place, Sam, to see how it would affect my mind, and the moment 'twas done, I got a lot calmer and felt a proper weight off my chest. And some fine night afore very long I shall put t'other half with the rest, and then, I believe, I shan't have a care."

"A very clever thought," said Samuel Nute in his slow way; "but there's a danger to it, because if you was took sudden, as the best of us may be, nobody would know where the money was to, and it might be lost."

Farmer Sleep nodded.

"I never thought on that," he said. "But if anybody knowed where the money was, my peace would be gone."

"You did ought to write it down and lock up the writing, only to be oped when you be dead," suggested Nute, and master allowed it was a very witty thought.

"I'll do that," he promised, "and put the secret place in a sealed envelope, only to be broken when I'm took. And thank you for the tip, Sam; and I may tell you you're down for a momentum in my will when the time comes."

"I'm very near so old as you," said Samuel, "and just as like to go first."

This talk wasn't meant for me, of course, but I took it in, and it cheered me a good bit, because it showed the old man hadn't been to his treasure since I had, and evidently didn't mean to go to it for a bit; but it also showed me he'd be visiting the rubbish-heap under the walnut-tree before very long; so I was glad Betty and me had fixed that night to be off.

'Twas long coming; but come it did, and at three in the morning I rose up and put on my best clothes and took my mother's photograph, which was the only thing in the world I valued, and slipped out by the scullery window. They'd think I was oversleeping

again, no doubt, and Sam would come up and call me at half after five; but by that time me and Betty would be in the train on the way to Okehampton.

So it looked then; yet, strange to relate, I hadn't been at the cross-roads half an hour along with my girl before all was changed, and her lightning-quick mind made another plan far more brilliant than the last.

We met at the appointed place, and I went in the little wood and found the money, and then we sat and talked for a bit, because we'd got nearly two hour to go four miles, and there weren't no hurry. And I told Betty about old Sleep and what a lucky thing it was that I'd heard him talking to Samuel. She listened very quiet, and then she started up all of a tremble with excitement. An owl was hooting in the trees over our heads, and I shall think of that moment all my life when I hear one of them night-birds hollering.

"Good gracious!" cried out Betty so loud that the owl went off in a hurry. "D' you mean to say you're going off with me after hearing that?"

"Of course," I said, "and the sooner the better."

"You silly gawk!" she answered me. "You must be three parts a fool. Here's money properly flung at your head, and you turn your back on it."

I couldn't see for my life what she was driving at, but she very soon made it clear.

"Why, the old man's going to put two hundred more in his rubbish-heap, ain't he?"

"Yes," I said, "and when he does, he'll find the rest have took wing."

"For two pins, Toby, I'd throw you over," she de-

clared, much to my amazement. "Why, can't you see? You've got to go back this instant moment and put this here box where you took it from. And then, come presently, instead of us having two hundred-odd pounds, we'll have four hundred!"

I fairly gasped with astonishment.

"You marvel!" I said, "I never should 'a' thought of that."

"If I am going to marry a fool," said Betty, "I'd better think twice afore I do it."

But it weren't, of course, that I was a fool; only that she was a wonder and far beyond the common pattern of clever girl.

"I'm no fool," I said, "and to show you I'm not, we'll nip back this instant moment afore dawn breaks, and I'll pop the box in its place and get up to bed afore cock-light. And the sooner we go the better."

So it fell out that not an hour later she was running home to Newhall Mill like a lapwing, and I was in the orchard. I'd soon got the money back in the rubbish-heap and was in my bed again, and such was my presence of mind that I didn't even forget my mother's picture, but put it on the mantel-shelf afore I turned in. And I weren't late rising, either, but got up with the birds, and was down-house afore Samuel Nute or the master.

And then come the time of waiting, and I never wish to go through nothing like it again. For three nights I made myself bide awake, hoping to hear William Sleep go out in the small hours to add to his treasure; and then I remembered that he might do it just as easy by

day as by night, for nothing ever called me or Nute to the back end of the orchard. And then, after a Sunday talk with Betty, she said 'twas very certain by now the balance of the cash was stored and we must try our luck again. So the night was fixed, and once more we set out, and once more we went home aagin, for the adventure came to naught. On the second time of asking a proper fearful thing fell upon us, at least so it seemed, and our plans and projects was cut short in a very crushing manner. All went well at the start, and I didn't take two bites at the cherry next time; but left the farmer's saving till the very night I was going to run away. And then I went, as before, and the weight of the box told me I'd got the lot sure enough.

And there was Betty with her bag, and 'twas her thought to ope the box there and then and fill our pockets with the money and hide the box careful, so as no clue should ever be found against us. She lighted a match, and I scat open the box — and it was full of stones!

Not a penny, but only the stones and a piece of paper with five words from Scripture, "Go and sin no more."

The perspiration properly burst out on me, and Betty very near fainted, for anybody could see 'twas a wicked plot against us, and that farmer, finding his money was gone, had hit on this dirty trick to get it back. And he'd catched me; and, if you'll believe it, Betty Bake, instead of comforting me, as a woman should against such a shattering misfortune, turned round on me, and said cruel words, and called me a

slack-twisted fool and a gawk and a gaby and everything else she could put her tongue to!

"Shut your mouth!" I said to her, getting pretty savage by then. "'S truth!" I said, "'tis you be to blame, not me, for 'twas your notion to put the money back, and I never should have thought on any such plan myself. So you be the fool; and now you've overreached yourself, you grasping creature, and so like as not I shall lie in clink tomorrow."

"And I hope you will," she dared to say. "You'm the man, and you ought to have had the sense; and now you put the blame on a poor girl, like the mean coward you are; and never you speak to me again so long as you live. And if you try to drag me in, I'll have the law on you."

Well, that showed me bitter clear that Betty weren't what I thought, and I went so far as to tell her so on the spot. In fact, I got her in a proper rage, and she'd have liked to scratch my eyes out. But the dawn had broke by then, and so she just picked up her bag and turned her back upon me and went home; and 'twas many a long year after that before I passed the time of day with her again.

And meantime she married Teddy Lobb. Within three months of the fatal night she took him! And such was the power of that man and his way of handling her, that by all accounts she made him a very useful wife and mother, and turned into the narrow path, and never had a breath against her at St. Tid.

But as for me, I went home sick at heart, and a great shame came upon me, and the still small voice woke,

and afore breakfast-time, such is the amazing contrariness of human nature, I was glad that the thing had happened. I knew I was a wicked rogue at last, and the discovery made me feel lighter-hearted than I'd felt for a month of Sundays. For you mustn't think I'd had no bad moments over the job. I had; and now that Providence had saved me from myself in a manner of speaking, I saw my escape, and felt that I couldn't be too thankful to my Maker for His great and undeserved goodness.

But I knew I couldn't leave it at that if I was to put the job right with Heaven, and it was borne in upon me I must confess all and take the consequences. I didn't rise to such a height of virtue all in a minute, however, and it weren't, in fact, till I thought upon the text as Farmer Sleep had left in his box for the thief that I decided to make a clean breast of it. For it seemed to me that out of gratitude for getting his money back farmer might find himself in a very Christian frame of mind, and might even forgive, though 'twas beyond reason to ask him to forget.

So I owned up to him, and he weren't much surprised, either.

"I thought 'twas you," he said, "and I'm very glad that God have put it into your heart to confess your wicked crime. And I'll ax you one question, Tobias Hawke, if you please. How did you find out?"

"I see your lantern light on my bedroom ceiling, Master; and with that I rose up and followed you."

"I won't pretend I was clever enough to catch you

out," he answered; "but Uncle Retallack to St. Tid was the man. When I found out on a Saturday night, going to put in another ten pound, that I'd been robbed, I went to Uncle Retallack with the trouble, and he told me how I might very like get back my money, for though the devil's a clever party, there's quite as clever as him, if not more so; and so he was bested, and the wit of man and the will of God have come between you and your damnation, Tobias."

"I'm a changed creature from this moment," I said to Farmer Sleep; "and if you don't give me up to justice, I'll richly reward you."

"What did my text in the box say?" he asked.

"'Go and sin no more,'" I answered.

"Then you can do it," he said. "You can go this instant moment, for I've done with you; but I won't take no action, and I won't tell nobody but Uncle Retallack, who has a right to hear how his cleverness was rewarded. You go and seek other work far ways off from here, and get your soul right with God, and thank Him many times on your knees for His long-suffering mercy. The way of the sinner be hard most times, but in your case it's been cruel easy, and the least you can do is to thank your Maker for your luck. And if so be as you reform and justify your existence and save a bit of money, don't you hide it in no rubbish-heap for the first knave to find, but take it to Uncle Retallack, or some other sensible man, who understands what to do with it. I was a fool and deserved to lose my stuff, and you were a wicked rascal and deserved a

lot more than you're getting, so we've both good cause to be thankful; and you can be gone by midday, if you please."

So I went, and though 'tis too much to say that I was so good as the holy text and sinned no more from that day to this — for who can say they've been sinless from one and twenty to seventy and three? — yet I'm known today as a straight old man, with a good wife and good children, and money in the bank, and very well thought on as a lay preacher for miles around. I was brought to the fold by an easy path, sure enough, and never shall be sufficiently thankful it was so.

Five years after I left Lanteglos Meadows, I met Betty Lobb, so she was then, at a wedding, and had a minute's talk with the woman. A mother of three by that time she had become, and so good a chapel member, thanks to her husband, as I myself.

"Things have changed with us, Betty," I said, "since that bitter night when we thought to do wickedness, and was saved by the watching Lord."

And she looked through me like a pane of glass and said, "What bee's in your bonnet, Toby Hawke? I don't know from Adam what you be talking about. But if you're trying to make out that I ever did a wrong thing, or thought a wrong thing, or anything like that, you'd better tell my husband and hear what he's got to say about it."

Defiant like she spoke, with a flash in her eyes; so I just shrugged my shoulders and went my way, and felt sorry the woman weren't so near grace as I could have wished.

JENIFER AND THE TWAIN

I

Them that come to St. Tid for the first time be often a good bit surprised to see what a lot of maimed men we've got. You'll scarce go round the village without finding a chap or two on crutches, or short of an arm or a leg. And the reason is that the great slate quarries, where five hundred men and boys get their living, have their dangers and perils, for not only the rock-men below, who handle the slate and break it out with dynamite and send it to the surface, but the hill-men also come to grief sometimes. For nought's perfect, and in the battle with the forces of Nature, they'll break loose now and again and turn on us that think we have tamed them. In fact, a man wants to be watchful and wary all his time in a slate quarry, because the accident happens when least expected, and the slate's always ready to fall, or the land to slip; and the guillotine, that "trues" the slates, is always bitter quick to take your fingers off, if you forget what you're about for a second and get 'em under the knife.

Such untoward happenings, as well as them that end in death, we very properly account the work of God; and when you've said that, you've said all you can say about them. But in the long history of St. Tid's quarries, which runs back to Queen Bess, so they tell me, a

few dark deeds have to be chronicled; and if God Almighty be answerable for many a sad come-along-of-it, there's no manner of doubt that the Devil must be blamed now and again for others; because 'tis fantastic and out of all nature to suppose, where five hundred humans pursue their daily task, that the Evil One won't find good hunting now and again.

A very curious, tangled tale is this of Jenifer Keat, daughter of farmer Harry Keat. She was a superior young maiden, well educated and clever without a doubt; and she was a bit too clever for her father, I reckon, for I've heard him openly declare that you can educate a girl out of all usefulness.

"'Tis a fact," farmer said, "that learning may be a great danger to the female mind, and my Jenifer have now reached a pitch of education that soars high above the Fifth Commandment. Too much book-learning have made her selfish, and she's no more good to help her mother, or me, than a bird in a bush."

However, the fact that she weren't a domestic sort of maiden didn't prevent her being very handsome, and her own generation had no quarrel with her. Plenty of girl friends she had; and presently the usual sort of thing happened, and she fell in love with one young chap, while another young chap fell in love with her.

Tommy Jago was only a rock-man in the quarries, and, though a very fine youth, strong and well set up, and a good enough specimen of a boy, yet 'twas just pure cheek him falling in love with Jenifer, because she was much above him in every way, for the Jagos were very humble folk, with a bad record at that, while

Harry Keat owned a thousand acres, and his big place between the coast and St. Tid was his own freehold. But Tommy happened to be one of they dark, dour, obstinate chaps, and there's no doubt that his masterful way rather appealed to Jenifer, who was masterful herself. Yet, all the same, it wasn't Tommy that she loved, and when this story began, nobody but Jenifer herself knew where she'd lost her heart. For she kept her secret very close, and bided in patience and hope.

And meantime Tommy Jago courted her, for he got two chances every week of his life, because him and Jenifer were both in the chapel choir of the Little Baptists; and so they met, not only on Sundays, but also on practice nights. Often and often they'd sing out of the same hymn-book, which be a very favourite Cornish way of love-making, and has led to matrimony oftentimes.

Jenifer most certainly liked Tommy for his qualities, and, if t'other chap hadn't been there, I doubt not young Jago would have won her against her family, and wore her father and mother down. But she never could get the vision of Andrew Polwarn out of her mind, and it ain't strange that a girl educated well, and a bit of an artist in her way also, should have found Andy, as he was called, an attractive object. There's no doubt he was amazing good to look at, and afterwards, when the murder was out and she could speak about it, Jenifer said that Andy happened to be the living likeness of a Greek statue of great fame by the name of "Mr. Hermes," whoever he was. And, seeing that Andy had crisp hair and a beautiful nose and a

gentle, kindly expression — like the statue, so Jenifer said — she'd fallen utterly in love with him. So had other girls, for that matter, though none, of course, would own thereto. Yet, for his part, Andrew Polwarn didn't respond to one girl more than another. He was a rare pattern of chap, without a doubt, for not only could you say he was amazing handsome, but you had to grant him rare modesty. He set no store at all on being out of the common good-looking, and, if anybody had told him so, he'd have laughed at their nonsense. He weren't very clever, and knew it; but he respected brains in other people, and he thought a lot of Tommy Jago, because he was such a sharp blade and full of ideas.

Andy was a rock-man at the quarries also — from choice, not need; for there was no reason, but his love of hard, open-air work, why he should have gone into them at all. But he enjoyed it, and stuck to the heavy labour of splitting out slate rock in all weathers, though, if he'd so minded, he might have been in a grocer's shop with a promised share in the business. But his father was at the quarries, and Andy took to the work, and meant to stick to it, despite the fact that his uncle, a prosperous tradesman at Launceston, wanted him in his shop.

Polwarns were well thought of, and good friends of the Keat family; but they were Church folk, and that makes a difference in a lot of ways, for worshipping in the same place and sitting under the same minister draws people together, if 'tis only for the pleasure of saying what they think about their pastor.

So there it stood, and while Tommy courted Jenifer for all he was worth, she dreamed dreams about Andy all the time, and counted it a red-letter day when she met him, and often wondered if any maiden would ever be named with him. He was always terrible pleasant to her when they chanced together, and sometimes she fancied he showed a thought more civility to her than other girls; but whether that was so or not, he never let on about it, and, for all anybody could tell, he was heart-whole and without a care.

Nothing seemed to happen for a bit, but Jenifer got tidings of Andy pretty frequent, because he and Tommy Jago worked together on the " Grey Abbey " slate seam in the quarry, and Jago, little knowing that the girl he loved was full of secret interest in his mate, often spoke of Andy. 'Tis true he was a bit contemptuous of the other's brain power and simple outlook on life, but he never said anything against his fellow-worker, and frankly praised his mighty muscles and great strength.

" If he'd larn now, he'd be the finest wrestler in Cornwall," confessed Tommy; " but, as 'tis, though I'm very near two stone lighter and not half his huge strength, I could throw him inside five minutes every time. But he's a peace-lover and as gentle as a woman, though strong as a giant. He'll never do no good at the quarries, nor rise to be a leader same as I shall, because I've got more will-power and more intellects than him."

Which was all very interesting to Jenifer. And another thing Tommy said interested her still more, for he scoffed at Andy's humble nature.

"He's properly frightened of the girls, I do believe," declared young Jago, "and how ever he'll summon courage to fall in love, or find the pluck to tell a maiden so when he do, be gormed if I know."

"He ain't in love, then?" asked Jenifer, and the young man flouted the idea.

"Don't know the meaning of the word," he assured her.

Then things began to move soon after that, and Tommy, who weren't made of patience, but had a good spice of the devil in him, and a great trick to fight for his own hand, proposed marriage for the fourth time to Jenifer, seeing her home from choir practice. And he varied his offer of heart and hand a bit, and made it clear he was getting fed up with Jenifer's delays and postponements.

"Why the mischief can't you say 'Yes' and have done with it?" he asked. "You care a lot for me, or you'd never keep me on the hooks like this and go out walking Sundays, and all the rest of it. And nobody knows her own mind better than what you do in most things, so it's time you took me in the face of the parish; and then I know where I am, and can set on to your father about it. For I'll mighty soon get him to see I'm the right one, so soon as you have."

Well, the girl granted he had some reason on his side, and promised him that she'd settle the matter afore long; but when she began seriously to think on him, she found herself weighing his faults against his virtues, and turning him over in such a cold-blooded and indifferent fashion, that it was quite certain that

she didn't love him in the least, and could never marry him. Then she was struck with remorse, for there's no doubt she had let him see a lot of her, and led him to think she was very well content in his company. And, having reached that stage, Jenifer began to relent a bit, and ask herself whether Tommy wouldn't do as well as anybody else for a husband, if she must have one. But her proper instinct rebelled against that, for to marry for the sake of marrying be a vain thing; and so she had decided that Tommy must be sent about his business once for all. And after she had made up her mind, a great and remarkable adventure happened to her.

It chanced that Jenifer had been down the valley and she was coming home from Newhall Mill by the woods. She had taken a short cut, which meant a jump over a stream; but when she got to it, the stream was up over the banks, for there'd been a proper thunderstorm twenty-four hours earlier, and the little river was in flood. It meant two mile more on to her walk afore she could get home, and she was just turning back, none too pleased with the accident, when who should come through Newhall Wood but Andy Polwarn. He was bound same way as her, and she bade him stop.

"No use, Mr. Polwarn," she said; "the river be up over the banks. You can't get across."

But he laughed at that.

"'Twill take more'n a drop of water to turn me back, Miss Keat," he answered. And then he made her an offer.

"If I take off my boots and socks and turn up my

trousers, I shall get over very easy," he told Jenifer; " and if you don't feel it beneath your dignity for me to carry you over, I'm very willing to do so. 'Twill save you two good mile o' walking and take but five seconds."

Well, there 'twas. And if anybody else had offered, I doubt the girl would have said " No " very quick. But she loved him, and nature will out, and the thought that she'd be in Andy's arms for once in her life, anyway, was too much for Jenifer Keat. It do sound bold and forward, without a doubt, on paper, but there 'tis; she felt so, and thanked him for his sporting offer, but dursn't look in his face while she did. As for him, when she agreed, he was very well pleased to pleasure her, and took off his shoon and his socks and turned up his trousers to the knee.

" Perhaps you'll be so kind as to carry my gear while I carry you," he suggested; " but, all the same, if you'd rather not do so, I can come back for 'em."

" Of course I'll carry 'em," she answered. " 'Tis the least I can do, I'm sure."

So he picked her up like a baby, and it must be confessed, though he'd said he'd be through the water in five seconds, when the time came he took a good bit more. In fact Jenifer, after he found the fine weight of her in his arms, acted upon Andy in a very remarkable manner. For he'd never had a maiden so close to him afore; and he liked it amazing, and he was much interested and delighted to look in her eyes and see the rosen in her cheeks and her bosom rise and fall, because she was panting a bit with excitement. In fact, both of 'em enjoyed it something wonderful, and Andy, for

the first time in his life, found he could be artful. For he pretended the water was too deep here and there, and paddled about in mid-stream till Jenifer got frightened and commanded him to get across and have done with it, or else go back.

"If you don't, I'll drop your shoes in the water," she said.

With that he took her over and released her terrible reluctantly; and then he blamed himself for a silly toad, and said he'd lost the chance of a lifetime.

"And what might you have lost?" she axed; but he only shook his head and wouldn't tell her. So she went on her way in a proper miz-maze, and knew very well now that it must be Andy Polwarn, or nobody. While, as for the young man, he felt it would be awful nice to have Jenifer in his arms again, and from that day forward he found her in his thoughts a lot.

Soon afterwards him and Tommy was working side by side in the quarries on the "Grey Abbey" seam in a deep hole, and Andy, in his simple way, told of his adventure. Of course, he didn't know nothing of Tommy's hopes, and he just prattled as to how he'd carried Jenifer over the brook, and how nicely she'd thanked him for so doing.

"'Tis a very fine thing seemingly to have a maiden in your arms," said Polwarn, "and I'll tell you in secret, Tom, I might have took her across that water much quicker than what I did; but, God forgive me, I dallied a bit."

The other was using his iron at the time, and tapping a hole in the rock for a stick of dynamite; and I dare

say, if Andy had known how near his mate was to lifting that bar of steel and bringing it down on his own curly hair, he'd have felt a good bit of surprise; but Tommy hid his savage heart and said nothing.

A steam whistle sounded soon after, which was the signal for blasting. So they loaded the holes they had driven in the rock-face, and lit the fuses and ran off, to take shelter against the explosions. There's regular times for blasting at St. Tid, and when the whistle went, other men from many different parts of the quarry also lighted their fuses and sought safety. Then, in due time, from all round the quarries there burst out volumes of yellow smoke, and rocks and rubbish were hurled high up in the air, where the slate was torn out of the bed. And a great volume of sound, like a thunderstorm held on a chain, jolted and roared and rattled round and round and round the quarry cliffs. Then slowly the echoes died down and the riot ceased, and the rock-men got back to their work, and found the masses of stone ready for 'em to handle and lever out of the smashed-up beds.

But Tommy said nought in return for the secrets he'd heard from Andrew Polwarn, and when Andy axed young Jago whether he'd ever felt any sort of fancy for a maiden, the other shook his head.

"No, I ain't," he answered, "and I hope I never shall, for women be all oncertain, tricky creatures at best, and the less a chap has to do with 'em the better for his self-respect and his peace of mind."

"No doubt you're right," admitted Andy; and Tom said no more on the subject, but shut his mouth and

kept his rage warm for Jenifer next time he should fall in with her.

He ordained to give her a bit of his mind about such a rash and outrageous thing; for by now he reckoned he was properly tokened to her, and he meant to make it mighty clear to her understanding, once for all, that if she wanted for a chap to go carrying her over streams and such-like proceedings, she must come to him henceforth and only him.

II

But, when Tommy tackled Jenifer in earnest, he got an ugly surprise.

"I've made up my mind," she said, "as I promised you I would do, and I feel terrible sure we wasn't meant for one another, as you thought, Tom Jago. We can be very good friends, I hope, and admire each other, and so on, but marriage is different. So I'll say 'No,' if you please."

He was patient, to begin with, but patience weren't his strong point best of times, and, against her fixed determination, he soon lost his temper and got to the bottom of things short, sharp, and brutal.

"You'm mad," he said, "and you'm wicked and cunning with it, for you think to deceive me, but you don't. This means another man, and you know it."

"If it do, what then? 'Tis a free country," she told him. "And, anyway, you've got no right to say it means another man. I never said I'd wed you, and again and again, when you've pressed it, I told you not to hope for any such thing."

"You was coming to it so fast as you could," he declared, "and you was in two minds when last I offered, else you wouldn't have took time to think; but now, just because a certain fool — However, I'm not here to talk of anybody else — I'm here to talk of you; and if you turn me down now, 'tis as good as jilting me, and you'll be disgraced so long as you live."

But Jenifer wouldn't allow that.

"You're a coward and a bully to say any such thing," she told him, "and, what's more, you know it isn't true, or anywhere near true. There's no call to give you reasons: it's enough for you to know I'm not going to marry you. And if you go round saying I've jilted you, there may be 'a certain fool,' as you put it, who'll want to know the reason why."

"Let him come, then," answered Tommy. "I ban't afeard of your friends, I assure you."

She was going from him as fast as her legs could carry her by that time, and so he changed his note and calmed down, and begged her to forgive him.

"'Tis small wonder I lost my temper, Jenifer, for this properly ruins my life," he said. But she had been rubbed up the wrong way too much to calm down very easy. She began to distrust him, and it was some time before she got gentle again. Then, finding him contrite seemingly, she forgave him on condition he'd say no more on the subject. They parted, calm to the eyes, though she smarted still, and he had ten wakeful and revengeful devils hid in his breast.

Already he was looking on ahead, and his lawless nature broke loose, and he began to think evil things

against Jenifer and the innocent man who had carried her across the stream. For, from the first minute, Tommy had left a loophole for himself, and while another man would have plumped out what he knew, and accused the girl of changing her mind because of the adventure with Andy Polwarn, this man was too cautious for that. He'd thought it out before he went to Jenifer, and now, as the result of keeping his mouth shut on that subject, he found himself in a safe and strong position to do the evil in his heart. For he argued that Andy had come between him and the hope of his life, and he also argued that, if Andy weren't there, Jenifer would very soon see sense again and take him.

And meantime t'other man found himself in love, head over tail, and it made him melancholy and doubtful. For he was never one to set much store on himself, and now, when he pictured offering for such a piece as Jenifer, he felt his own unworthiness, and doubted not that such a bold thought could never come to anything at all. And first he done a very clever thing, and went to his sister, and bade her find out if Jenifer was a heart-whole maid, or if, as seemed more likely, such a beautiful creature was tokened to a man worthy of her. Because, if that was so, Andy felt he'd better give up his dreams at once. But Jane Polwarn, who knew Jenifer very well, felt sure that she was free to be courted, though she also knew that Tommy Jago was a friend of hers, and told Andy as much.

"Never!" said her simple brother. "Why, I mentioned the maiden's name to Jago not long ago, and he

said that he'd never wed one of 'em, and had no use for the girls!"

"To put you off, no doubt," answered Jane.

However, she knew Jenifer well enough to be personal, and, guessing that Andy was thinking about her serious, Jane soon took occasion to go into the question. Then she told her brother the truth about it.

"Her and your mate in the quarry are good friends, and have walked out together a bit, and think the same about a good many subjects, both being very clever in the matter of brains," said Jane; "but there's nothing between them on Jenifer's side, though Tommy may wish there was. He's after her very fierce, without a doubt, but there's nought to it at present so far as Jenifer Keat's concerned."

From that day forward Andy began to fret and worrit, because he had a terrible fair pattern of mind, and, even in love, didn't find himself as selfish as you'd expect. He wondered a lot if he had a right to try and cut Tommy out, and he couldn't make up his mind. Then he told himself it was impossible, and Jenifer would never look at him beside such a clever man as Jago. He lost his sleep, and grew wonderful restless, and gave himself away in the eyes of his mother, who very soon saw the change that had come over him.

Then a most curious thing happened, for one night, sick of tossing sleepless in his bed, Andy rose up, rayed himself, and went out of doors in the moonlight to calm his thoughts and decide, once for all, if he would go on with it and ax Jenifer to take a walk, or give it up and put hope out of his mind.

And the moon decided him to go on with it. He was walking round the lip of the quarry at the time — tramping round over the broken ground above the great precipices that fall to the workings far below and then, suddenly, just as he had begun to get ashamed of his silliness, and decided to go to Jenifer red-hot and chance it, he heard a most unexpected sound far down below him. 'Twas the note of a tamping iron driving a drill, and though a very common, everyday noise to any quarryman's ear, to hear it then, at two in the morning, rising softly from the black depths of the quarries when every man of all those hundreds of workers was in bed and asleep except himself, surprised Andy amazing. At first he thought he fancied it; but there was no mistake, and for a minute he even forgot Jenifer before such a startling thing. He didn't believe in fairies, good or bad, nor yet in the old stories about friendly pixies helping the men in the works; but now his doubt was shook. He ordained with himself to go down, and down he went; and then, finding himself in the works, all so deserted and strange under the moon, half silver bright and half dead black in the shadow, Andy admitted afterwards that a funny sensation came over him, like as if things was crawling on his skin, and he shouted, to keep up his courage, and bawled out to know who was there and what they was doing.

'Twas a queer sort of adventure altogether, because the place, so familiar by day, had altered by night, and everything looked different. A rat or two squeaked away before him in the bottom, for there's lots of rats

in the quarries; but the sound of the tamping iron ceased the moment he shouted, and then happened a thing that brought back Andy's nerve, for, though terrible odd in itself, it showed that a man, and not a ghost or a fairy, was responsible for the noise he'd heard. Suddenly, under the white, moony light, he saw a figure making off afore him. 'Twas a man, and that was all he could tell about it; and the man seemed in a good bit of a hurry, for he climbed up the east side of the great pit, along old, disused galleries and ledges, and made no answer to Andy when he shouted again and axed him who he was. In less than no time the fellow vanished, and, wondering a good bit who it might be, young Polwarn climbed out himself and went home.

He'd turned back to his own thoughts before he crept to his bed, and the night wandering had done one thing for him. It determined him to have a dash at Jenifer, because he'd heard the saying that all is fair in love, and since there weren't nobody tokened to her, he felt he had so good a right to offer as any other man.

And next day he told his adventure to Tommy Jago; but he forgot that the story had two sides, and was a bit flustered when his mate put a question.

Tommy laughed the tale to scorn and said as the other must have dreamed it. Then he asked:

"And if 'tis true as you think, and you was out there mooning about at two in the morning, perhaps you'll tell me why?"

Andy, being the soul of fairness, had to grant it a fair question, but he weren't prepared to answer all the truth.

"No doubt it seems strange," he said; "but I'd got something a good bit on my mind, and couldn't sleep, so I slipped on my clothes and came for a walk."

The other laughed sourly at that, and very well knew what Andy didn't tell him.

"You'd better take your secrets to them with more wits than what you got yourself," he answered, "then, perhaps, you'll get light thrown on 'em."

"I shall, for that matter," answered Polwarn. "I was in doubt what to do about a certain thing, but now I ain't. I be going to take my secrets to somebody mighty soon."

His resolves, however, all came to nought, for a proper fearful tragedy overtook the young man two days after, and, but for the watching Lord, his thread would have been cut afore the next Sunday came round. Anyway, he didn't go courting for many a long month after that.

It happened like this. Andy and Tom were working in a bit of a tunnel drove in the solid face of the rock, where Andy's father, the foreman, reckoned there was a very fine bunch of slate, if only it could be got at. But tunnel work weren't favoured at St. Tid, because for countless generations the men had toiled in open quarries, and when the new way was tried, same as they do in Wales and Pennsylvania, where there's many a Cornishman working from the Old Country, the men grumbled a bit.

However, them in command hoped to prove themselves right, so the tunnel was going in, and Andy Polwarn and Tommy Jago were at it. And there came

a fatal day when Andy was at the face of the rock, twenty feet inside the mouth, up on a ledge, breaking through a curtain of quartz to get to better things beyond. He was hammering away, with his thoughts on Jenifer, no doubt, and quite by chance he happened to stop a minute and look round. God had turned his head at the critical moment. Then, not six yards from him and down below, he saw a fearful thing. For there was a time-fuse burning briskly, and evidently joined up to a charge of dynamite in the solid rock under his feet. And beyond it he saw Jago creeping away out of the tunnel so fast as he could go.

Andy gave a shout, worse luck, for, if he'd kept his mouth shut and jumped for it, he might have got clear in time; but the shout brought Tommy back, and he saw in a flash that his plot had failed. He had drove a drill, you see, where no drill ought to have been, and he knew that if he could explode a charge there, with his rival to work, the whole back end of the tunnel would come in and Andy be crushed to pulp. And 'twas him, of course, that Polwarn had heard tamping in secret. He had hid up his drill hole by day, and now, taking the moment when Polwarn was up top out of the way, he fired a charge and was slipping out when he found himself and his wickedness discovered.

An awful fight began between them then, for, as Andy bent for the fuse, Jago catched him behind and dragged him away.

"If I've got to die, too, you shall!" screamed the wretch, and he hung on to his rival and pinioned his

arms, so as he couldn't get one free to smite him. Within five yards of the fuse they fought, and other men, hearing the rumpus, ran up; but Andy shouted to 'em to keep away. The time seemed long to him, no doubt, hanging on the brink of eternity; but it weren't above thirty seconds all told, from the moment he jumped off the ledge to the moment the dynamite exploded. There was a proper roar in the tunnel, and smoke and thunder belched out, and solid tons of rock was fetched down and pitched about like pats of butter. But a moment before the explosion Tommy had got a wrestler's hold on t'other, and throwed him flat. And that made all the difference between death and life for the innocent man.

When the smoke was clear, fifty chaps set to work and got to the pair inside; and they found that Jago was not there. The wretched creature had been blown to ribbons, and they only got him out in pieces; but Polwarn, though badly battered and to all seeming dead as t'other, was whole. They picked him up and carried him to the trolleys, and ran him up to the pappot head so quick as might be. And that night he lay in his home insensible and one leg gone, but a living creature still, with his great strength and clean life behind him to offer the doctors a morsel of hope.

They didn't give none, however, and said afterwards that it was not their skill, but the nursing Andy got from his mother that kept the flicker in him for the first four-and-twenty hours. But live he did, by a miracle, and though a shadow rather than a man for

six months afterwards, he got a bit of his old strength back at last, and when his wooden leg came he was ready for it.

For a week his wits was lost, and when he came back to them, he told his story, and showed terrible clear how the dead man had plotted to take his life. But why for, none in the world knew, unless it was Jenifer Keat. Andy, however, had gived up all thought of her when he came to his senses and found a leg gone. He was terrible weak, and confided in his sister, while she sat by him to mind him, after he'd turned the corner out of danger.

"I confess to you," he said, "that I'd lifted my eyes to her. But I weren't good enough even as a whole man, and to offer the girl half a man would be only to insult such a wonder as Jenifer."

Jane listened and said little. But she had her ideas, and, though she didn't contradict Andy, she told the story to somebody else, with far-reaching results. Because it didn't make no matter of difference to Jenifer that the man she loved had lost a leg. She was only cruel sorry that the leastest bit of such a precious creature had gone.

"But there's enough left to love, I reckon," she said to Jane, fierce-like.

"His face be spared, you must know," Andy's cunning sister told Jenifer, "and doctor says, when the stitches come out of his cheek, there'll be nought but a scar or two."

"Scarred or not, he's Andy, and that's enough for me," confessed Jenifer; and so the strange thing hap-

pened that she took the first step, as if she was a royal queen, and when she come to see the sick man in fulness of time, 'twas she as told him plump out that she loved him and couldn't live without him. He was so weak that he very near fainted at the great news; but it done him a world of good, notwithstanding, and helped the doctors at their work on the man without a doubt.

And now, if you was to go to Launceston some day and call at the big grocer's shop in Market Street, 'tis any odds but you'd see Andy Polwarn behind the counter, for he's partner with his uncle, and he'll have it all when the old man drops.

He lives nigh his work, in a very nice little house along with Jenifer, and she worships every hair of his head, and sets him high above their three childer, though very fond of them, too, specially the eldest boy, who be the daps of his father. But his three-year-old maid is Andy's favourite, because she's got her mother's eyes and her mother's way of holding her head.

PANTING AFTER CHRISTOPHER

Mercy Parsons was born with a masterful nature. It looked as if Providence knowed she would be a power at St. Tid, and gave her the proper disposition accordingly. At seventeen, when her grandfather died and left her all his money — fifteen hundred pound — she hoarded it very clever and didn't touch a penny of the capital, but left it to goody. To Christopher Tonkin she took it, under-foreman at the slate quarry; and that showed her sense even at seventeen, for Christopher was the cleverest man at St. Tid though but five-and-twenty. To be under-foreman at that age was a record of a wonder in itself; and, more than that, he was a leading local preacher with the United Methodists, and stood for St. Tid in the Parish Council. At figures none could touch him, and Mercy, when she got her windfall, went to the man and asked him to look into the money for her. Which he did do, and found it was only drawing three and a half per centum, and soon put it out where it was good for four. They'd known each other all their lives, and Christopher always thought Mercy was a child; but now he found that she'd grown up. In fact, she showed an uncommon lot of sense, and he respected her strength of character. Because it takes a strong person to like a strong one. When weak folk run against a strong one, it irks them,

because we all would rather herd with our own kind for choice.

Christopher was an orphan and lived with his old aunt, who had to choose between the union and keeping house for Christopher. And then Mercy became an orphan too, along of her mother dying, and she was left a good cottage and another clear two hundred a year above what she got from her grandfather's money. Two hundred and sixty she drew, and everybody knew it and wondered who would be the lucky man.

She was one of them strong-faced, healthy girls — flaxen and full-bosomed — with blue eyes as bright as they were hard. The people respected her, and knew her head was screwed on the right way, and felt she'd be a credit to the parish and never make no mistakes or do the wrong thing; but they didn't go to her for help, or offer to borrow a shilling now and then, or anything like that, because they felt without words she wasn't that sort.

She had a high hand and kept her own secrets and never gossiped about anything or anybody. And if she had, I dare say the people would have liked her better. But a secret she held, though it was such a terrible queer one, that she wouldn't have whispered it to her own heart, let alone the ear of anybody else. She was eighteen when her mother died, and she took a maid-of-all-work and had the cottage done up from floor to basement, and sold a good bit of the old furniture and bought new and lived like a lady. 'Twas a great source of admiration to St. Tid, I do assure you, to see such a young thing so commanding. No airs or graces

exactly, yet a way with her — a sort of keep-your-distance and mind-your-own-business sort of way. Not that she was unfriendly or ungracious. Christopher Tonkin said that she was a fine, self-respecting creature, and a very good example to all the young folk of St. Tid in his opinion, so presently the people, seeing 'em together once or twice — at a free luncheon of the United Methodists and so on — gave it out that like would to like, and that they'd be tokened some fine day in the eyes of the nation. But others, who knew Christopher better, said that he was far too ambitious a man to hamper hisself with a wife before he was thirty; while as for money, it weren't no temptation to him, because he had no vices and never drank, nor smoked, nor went away for week-ends, nor nothing like that. He just lived for the quarries and worked early and late; and he never missed chapel, and he never missed a meeting of the Parish Council. Every minute of his time was put into work, and, even if he'd wanted to go courting, it didn't look as if it would fit into the life he'd planned for himself. Still, the busiest man can find time for that, and in truth Christopher had thought a bit about Mercy — the more so because, not being blind, he could see she was addicted to him and always pleased to see him. But he had his ideas about what a wife should be, and he reckoned there was lots of time to watch Mercy and mark how her character went on. Maybe he undervalued her through ignorance, for his bulldog knew more about women than he did. In fact, his views on the female question were very old-fashioned indeed. However, that didn't interfere with

his usefulness, for he was a tower of sense, and once, when the chairman of the Council was away, he took the chair, and they all agreed none could have done it better. He was heart and soul for St. Tid, and it was thanks to him that the village got the electric light from the quarries, and our streets were bright as day in the winter evenings. And other good things he also did. A dark, hatchet-faced man he was, with keen, black eyes and little whiskers and moustache, and a thin figure of middle height. Always very nice in his manners and always bright and cheerful to the greatest and least. But a good conceit of himself and quite alive to what the people owed him.

And Mercy Parsons loved him — that was the English of it. She knew it, and she knew more than that. She'd summed him up to a hair, and felt positive certain that she was the woman for him. Her love didn't blind — she wasn't the sort to be blinded by anything; but it quickened her fine understanding, and she looked at herself from the outside, if you understand me, and saw quite clear that she was the very mate for Christopher, and would double his strength and help him on the ambitious road he was going. She felt positive that she would see with his eyes most times, and didn't doubt but that she would be right herself, when he happened to be wrong. There was something of a mother's love in it, I believe, for there's a bit of the mother mixed up in every real woman's love for a man. Despite all his common sense and strength, she felt older than him in many things, and was more and more impressed with the fact that she'd dearly like to

wed him, and that 'twould be the cleverest day's work of all his clever ones if he took her.

But the time went on and he didn't. 'Tis a sign of your own strength, of course, to find yourself opposed, and Mercy didn't let her secret hurt her. She waited and watched, and wasn't sorry when Christopher had a rival. In fact, it interested her above a bit, and she was gentle and patient with the man who now came into her life. She'd rather have died than marry Billy Blane, the miller, who now came along and began to court her, because he wasn't her sort by a thousand miles: but none could question his right to offer, for he was a well-to-do man, in a good way of business, and, though a bit old for Mercy, not too old in the eyes of the people or his own.

Five-and-forty Billy might have been. He was a pale-faced widower, and folk said that along of being in the dust of ground corn all his life, he'd took the colour. In fact, he was always dusty up to his hair. He had no children, and was whispered to be weak in the lungs; but he was a straightforward sort of man, and held his head high, and took himself serious.

Billy wasn't at the age when a man wastes time, and he showed very soon that he meant business with Mercy. And everybody wondered what Christopher Tonkin would do about it, and Mercy most of all. But he did nothing. Of course, he knew what was afoot — nothing escaped him — but he didn't love Mercy, and he wasn't jealous, and he felt that if she took the miller that was proof positive that she wasn't the wife for him; and that

if she didn't take the miller, things were as before and no harm done. So he went his busy way.

Then Mercy did a proper outrageous thing, and it wasn't for years afterwards that anybody ever got to hear tell about it. There happened a Sunday evening, after Christopher had preached a very good sermon and prayed a very far-reaching prayer at the chapel, and when he came out the girl waylaid him.

"If you've got a few spare minutes," she said, "I'll thank you to have a bit of talk with me, Christopher."

"And welcome," he answered. "Come in to supper with me and my aunt."

She expected that, and went along with him.

"How did you find the sermon?" he asked.

"I didn't listen to it," she answered. "I've got a good bit on my mind for the minute."

"So we all have," he said, "but we ought to put it away when we come to chapel, and go afore the Throne of Grace with an open heart."

"I know all that," she said. "You're an amazing man, Christopher. I don't believe there's a calling in life you wouldn't have shone at. Whatever you had took up you'd have gone on with it till you came out top."

"You was always too kind in your opinions of me, Mercy," he answered; "and for that matter, so far as one can say it of such a young woman, you're as wonderful as I am. 'Tis character, and, thank the Lord, we've both got it."

"So we have," she said, "and so far as I can see,

only us in all St. Tid. It mazes me to mark what slack-twisted, silly minds the men and women have. You're a tower of strength among the men, and if I was called to public life, I'd be the same among the women."

"Not that I hold with public life for females," he answered her. "A woman's best place is at the right-hand of a strong man."

"So I think," she said, quick as lightning, "and that's what I want to talk about. There's a man wants me — cruel bad he wants me, and — I ——"

"Leave it till we've had supper," he advised. "I know who 'tis very well. I'll go a bit further and say I'm a bit surprised at his cheek."

Well, that was a remark that pleased Mercy Parsons. Perhaps Christopher couldn't have said anything to have pleased her better for the moment; so she left it, and they talked of Christopher and what he was doing, and what he was meaning to do; which are the subjects that always interest a strong man most. And then, after she'd took supper with him, and his aunt was in the scullery washing up, he invited her to speak.

"Of course we all know 'tis Billy Blane," he said. "He's a very good miller, I doubt not; but — however, it ain't for me to say nothing against Billy."

"He came over two nights agone and offered marriage. You've got to see a man in love to understand his character, Christopher, and I may say that Mr. Blane astonished me. Under all that flour he's dusted over with, he's a fierce creature. He was very much in earnest. He offered for me very nice, and as I weren't in the least excited myself and expected it, I kept calm

and cool, and was able to criticize the man in his fiery moments. It was rather fine in a way to see a middle-aged person in such a frame of mind. His eye flashed and his forehead got dewy and he looked ten years younger than his age. I daresay that a good many maidens would have taken him. But in his highest moments I couldn't help thinking of you somehow, and picturing you offering a woman marriage. It ought to be a dignified thing, in my opinion. And so, no doubt, it would be if you was courting."

He nodded.

"Ess fay — an offer for a life-long partnership ought to be dignified — not to say cautious. And what did you answer, if I may ask?"

"You don't need to ask surely? You, of all men! We're not childer, and there's no false pride about me, though plenty of proper pride, I believe."

"Plenty, I should hope."

"I told him that he paid a great compliment to me, but that it couldn't be."

"Of course not — a man old enough for your father. And what next?"

"He mopped himself and sighed, and said he had a right to know if there was another had come between."

"He hadn't," declared Christopher. "That just shows Billy. You gave him 'no,' and there was an end of it."

"Well, I felt, somehow, I owed him something. I'm a cruel, honest woman, and couldn't tell a lie to a snail, let alone a man. There was another, of course, and I told him so."

Christopher flushed up at that.

"And you know who it was, I should hope," she said.

"I might and I might not," he replied. "I may have thought perhaps."

"Why — you, you, you, are the man! And well you know it. I've loved you all my life, I believe. And I've often wondered whether you'd be better with me at your elbow, or better without. You're too busy to think of such things, but I've got plenty of time, owing to being so methodical, and I've often felt that very thing you said just now so positive."

He was cool again and watchful as a hawk.

"And what did I say just now?" he asked.

"That a strong man was stronger for a strong woman at his elbow."

"'Better,' not 'stronger,'" he corrected her.

There was a bit of a pause then.

"To be better is to be stronger," she said. "However, it ain't for me to say no more. Perhaps I've said too much."

"You have and you haven't," he answered, like a lawyer. He was always balancing his words that way. "You've been very generous and oncoming, and for my part I don't see why not. You're rich and you've got a barrel-load of sense, and you don't let little silly manners and customs come between you and what's in your mind. And that's to the good: I'm with you there. But when it came to Billy Blane asking you to name the man, you ought to have withstood him. Now he'll go about saying that we're engaged; and we ain't."

She hadn't got nothing to answer, so she didn't

answer nothing. She felt that she'd fired her shot and missed. She got up to go and he got up likewise. Both were cool as fishes outwardly, whatever they were inside.

"I feel a lot flattered about it, however," he said. "I don't think none the worse of you, Mercy — far from it. I'm a very busy man and playing a big game, but I find myself exceedingly proud of being your friend. I shan't forget what you've said. And this I can tell you: I've set you a lot higher than any other woman on earth. We'll leave it at that, if you please. And if you can help me at any time, I shall let you know. And if I can help you, I shall be very proud to do it."

Then they parted, and she went off proper mad with anger at herself, and he turned it over very serious indeed. He was pleased in a quiet sort of way with the night's work, for he thought the world of her — when he'd got time to think of her at all, which wasn't often; but she didn't know how he was regarding her offer of marriage, and it got on her nerves presently, and she began to fret to think how she'd demeaned herself before him. But, of course, he didn't know she was fretting. He thought she'd done a thing that was quite becoming in a rich and handsome woman, and didn't know that what's in a man's blood to do, as a matter of course, be often only done by a woman at fearful cost and against her instinct. Impulsive people always have to pay a long price, sooner or late.

Mercy met him a month later and asked him to forgive her for talking as she had done; and he was much astonished.

"Lord bless you, my dear woman," he said. "Don't take it like that, or I shall think less of you. You were quite right. Queens drop the handkerchief," he said; "and you're a queen in my opinion, so why for shouldn't you?"

That comforted her no doubt and she cheered up a bit in secret, for she'd got terrible wisht after her failure, and the people marked it. What's more, they guessed at the truth, though in justice to the man, that wasn't Billy Blane's fault, for he kept her secret very honest and he didn't love her less for knowing it and still had a bit of hope.

Then Billy went for Christopher Tonkin — not savage and open of course, for he had no quarrel with any man he could put a name to; but crafty like. He wanted to show Mercy that Christopher weren't the only man of character and renown in St. Tid, and he reckoned he was quite as popular and clever and famed for sense as Tonkin was, or any other man round about; and so, when the next election for the Parish Council came on, which it did do six months afterwards, Billy Blane decided in secret to stand and offer himself for the post.

Christopher heard about it as a rumour, but he didn't give a second thought to the matter, because Billy was a reactionary in politics, and St. Tid was thought to be progressive. He'd romped in hands down before and reckoned his election again was a certainty and all over bar shouting. He only laughed when he heard tell that Blane was up against him, and he didn't take no trouble

to do anything, being quite content to know himself a sure winner.

It wanted but a fortnight to the election and Christopher was deep one night in the quarry accounts, when much to his surprise Mercy Parsons dropped in. He was rather vexed about it, because he was terrible busy and feared she took his poetical talk about the queen dropping a pocket handkerchief too serious. In fact he guessed she'd come to do the same again.

"I'm properly busy," he said, handing a chair to her, "but I daresay you ain't going to keep me very long."

"No, I ain't," she said; "only you may like to know that others are properly busy beside you. I daresay you've forgot all about the election?"

"Very near," he told her. "'Tis a matter of form and no more."

"I can't work for you, because you wouldn't let me," she answered. "But I've got ears and eyes, and I've been using them both of late. It's like this, and you ought to hear it. There's a lot of people going to vote for Mr. Blane — a lot more than you've got any idea of. He's been talking against the progressives, and giving figures, and explaining from his point of view; and I went to one of his meetings, and I can tell you that the people are lot taken by him. And the Church parson be working hard for him too. But where are you? And of a night, when he isn't airing his opinions in public, Mr. Blane's going round with a lantern and a piece of paper making a house to house visitation.

And he's promising everything and making a lot of ignorant people believe that 'twill be proper ruination to St. Tid if they don't put him in. I've marked him a lot of nights and heard the people talk about him; and the long and short is if you don't stir yourself while there's time, he'll out you, Christopher."

The man stared with amazement, and she took a breath and ran on.

"I've done what I can, and steadied down a good few doubtful ones; but it ain't my work. Why, this very night he's out up over in Wesley Terrace, and welcome everywhere as the flowers in May. You can go and see for yourself if you like."

Well, Tonkin pulled himself together, left his papers and got on his legs.

"I will," he said. He was too much excited to thank her or look at her. Before she knew it he was gone; and then she went home and wondered what he'd do next.

She soon found out, for in twenty-four hours there was an advertisement in all the shop windows saying that Mr. Christopher Tonkin, the people's friend, was going to hold a meeting in the big schoolroom on the subject of the election, and he was very wishful to put his views and what he'd done and what he meant to do before the honoured voters.

And the man held his meeting and started round of nights with a lantern and a piece of paper; and he worked during the fortnight afore the election like a team of hosses. Everywhere he found what a strong thing it is to get in first with a crowd of empty-minded

folk — ready most times as sheep for the slaughter — and everywhere he found what a powerful lot of voters had inclined to Blane and his politics and promises. In fact, when the election day arrived, Christopher Tonkin for the first time in his life was very doubtful of success. He found himself in a new frame of mind and couldn't let down his breakfast — a thing which mortally troubled him, for he doubted not that he must be parlous bad. 'Twas touch and go without a doubt, and to the last the issue hung in the balance. But he won. Only fourteen votes more than Billy Blane did Christopher receive, however, and he got the shock of his life, as he afterwards confessed. When the numbers were out and he said a few words and won a cheer from his supporters, he bethought of Mercy, and being a very fair-minded man, couldn't help seeing that she'd won the election for him.

His mind went up and down about it a good bit; but at last it began slowly to settle itself in her favour. He didn't hurry, and to the end I believe he was a thought regretful to take the plunge; but looking all round it and seeing the sort of girl she'd shown herself, he couldn't help feeling there was a lot in her favour and mighty little against. So he went over to her one evening, after waiting a week to see if she'd come to him, which she didn't.

They had a pleasant talk about it, and for the first time in his life Master Christopher found what it was like to have a woman in his arms and her lips on his mouth.

A TOUCH OF "FEARFULNESS"

A QUIET, easy chap was Amos Barton — a man very well content to live and let live. In fact the last on earth that would have left his uncle's farm and gone for a soldier at any other time than this.

But left an orphan, he had been brought up by a very clever aunt — one of the old sort with a streak of toughness in her — and seeing her nephew's fault was like to be that he'd sacrifice most anything for the sake of peace, she'd worked at his character in that matter and taught him that there were times when peace and self-respect couldn't drive in double harness. So it came about that when war broke upon us, Amos Barton found his aunt's teaching hold to him, and he didn't wait to be called, but offered. Indeed he was one of the first in all St. Tid parish to throw up the land and go in the army.

Of course in those dark days of the year 1914 — which seem as far away as Noah's Flood now — we none of us knew the height and depth of what the nation was in for; and there was a lot of fun and chaff to the recruiting, and many thought by the time the boys were drilled and knew their job the war would be over.

So there was plenty of laughter when we heard gentle Amos was going to the war — a chap, mind you, that even shirked sport, for his uncle, when speaking to a few of us at "The Green Man" one evening, declared

he could never get his nephew to touch a gun, or kill anything bigger than a wasp.

"But his sense of duty has called him to the wars," said Matthew Barton, "and though 'tis vain to think Amos can ever shine as a soldier, yet we may be sure he'll do his duty to the best of his limited powers."

Amos was Matthew's heir, you must know, if he didn't forfeit his hopes in the future.

"Why didn't he go in the Ambulance Corps?" asked Tom Chick, whose own son had also enlisted.

"He was told that what the nation wanted was fighting foot-soldiers," explained Matthew, "so a foot-soldier he'll be; though seeing how skilled he is along with horses and what a clever touch he has to tame 'em, I think he'd be doing more good in the cavalry myself. That gentle chap have a will of iron with horses. I've never known one beat him."

But Amos wasn't a hero in one pair of eyes by any means, and it came out presently that his sweetheart, Lucy Vale, felt a good bit put about when he joined up. She didn't wish it, and she reckoned Amos ought to have considered her feeling first. For people began to say that quite enough young men had volunteered for the new armies, and so Lucy, who knew Amos was a peaceful, soft-hearted chap by nature, reckoned he'd never shine at the front, or be a credit to her, or anybody. So she felt he'd better far keep out of harm's way and continue to be his uncle's horseman and leave war to such as had a better stomach for it.

"Good powers!" she said to Amos. "What should a man like you do in battle? Your one thought would

be to hurt nobody, and you'd stop to say you were sorry if you trod on anybody's toes, let alone run a bayonet into them. You'll only disgrace yourself if you go, and if you hear a shot fired in anger, such a tender creature as you will lose your nerve altogether and very likely run away, or do something dangerous."

"I'm sorry you feel like that, Loo," said Amos to her; "and I hope you're mistaken. I hate the thoughts of war and I ain't ashamed to say it; but I don't think I should be frightened; because if a man's doing his duty, there's no room for him to be frightened that I can see."

She kept at him, however, and made it a bit painful for Amos; but she didn't change his mind and, once in khaki, of course she could do nothing. The change dated from then, however, and there's no doubt Lucy Vale never felt quite the same to Amos after he joined the colours. She was a very fine figure of a girl with red hair and a complexion like a wild rose; but she had no large ideas and couldn't look much farther ahead than her own interests. For that matter that's the limit of more eyes than Lucy's.

So when she'd made a rare good match for a poor widow's daughter and won Amos Barton, she little liked to think she might lose him again, and didn't give the man any credit for the sacrifice, but blamed him for it instead. And perhaps what troubled her as much as anything was that Amos withstood her; for he'd never denied her before, and she was already thinking in her heart that the grey mare would be the better horse when they came to wed.

However she hid her mind, and I daresay it would have been all right, as more and more joined up. Indeed before long Lucy might have been the first to grumble if she'd been called to go out walking with a civilian. But there was another in it, and when young Jacob Warner, the gamekeeper, found that Lucy was a bit under the weather about Amos, he took very good care for his own ends to harp on it and make out a black case against the girl's betrothed.

He was a big, fine fellow, to the eye, but he hadn't no use whatever for the war and he let his master apply for him, and the Tribunal gave him six months, not for his own sake, but for Squire Trecarrow's. And when Amos was fairly off to France, Master Jacob began his games with Lucy and tried his very best to get her away from the absent man.

What went on between them nobody ever knew; but a gamekeeper's a chap that can amuse himself out of sight of other people by reason of his calling, and there's no doubt Lucy often met Jacob by appointment and listened to his nonsense.

She was weak but not wicked, and she didn't think she was doing wrong to listen to Jacob's love-making, more especially as she didn't feel none too forgiving to Amos for joining up; but we couldn't believe that she meant more than to amuse herself, and so Tom Chick, who was a friend of Amos Barton, decided he'd speak to Lucy.

He was a middle-aged man and had got a good few daughters of his own, so he felt he could say the word in season.

But he found Lucy Vale in rather a haughty spirit. To be plain, she told him to mind his own business. And then came the amazing thing, for suddenly two matters fell out simultaneously and we heard that Lucy had thrown over Amos and was tokened to the gamekeeper, and next we heard that Amos himself, who had now been in the trenches for six months, was getting a bit of leave and returning home to his uncle and aunt.

Leave comes along by chance when it can, you see, and a man don't know much beforehand when he is to get back; so it fell out that Lucy's letter to Amos, telling him she'd changed her mind, never reached him, and the first he heard about the adventure was at the railway station, where Tom Chick went to meet him.

He found Amos changed and yet the same. He was thinner, but a mighty lot harder; his gentle eyes had taken a different expression, and there'd come a sharp line between 'em. His voice was different too, and him that had gone to the wars a kindly boy came back a man and one that knew his own mind, be sure. He had come through without a scratch and seen some properly awful service. He'd killed men with his own weapons, and hoped to kill more and weren't ashamed to say so. His outlook on life was altered by the horrors that life had showed him, and he told Tom that he'd never known the meaning of reality before he went to France.

That gave Tom his chance.

"There's a bit of reality waiting here for you all the

same," he said, "and I'm very sorry to say it's in the shape of some proper bad news."

"Not aunt or uncle?" asked Amos.

"No, they're all right."

"Lucy, then? She ought to be here to meet me."

Then Tom told him that Lucy had gone over to Jacob Warner, that the thing had been done not a fortnight before, and that there was a letter waiting in France that minute with the fatal news. Knowing the gentle nature of Amos, Chick feared he'd be properly torn to pieces by this fearful mishap; but the outward change had crept to the inner man also as it seemed. Anyway Amos didn't take on much to the eye. When he heard who the other man was he just gave a short laugh and bade Tom Chick come along with him to "The Green Man" and have a drink. He'd got a very fine German helmet as a trophy and in ten minutes he was showing it to a dozen men in the bar of the inn and getting a lot of congratulations from his old acquaintance.

They found the change in him, too, for the work his hand had been called to perform was reflected not only in his voice and his eyes, but in his manner of looking at things and in his opinions. He didn't show off or talk big, for nothing could have made him do that, but 'twas plain to the least observing that life had lifted Amos into a pretty keen blade. He didn't contradict nor argue about the war, but he just told 'em; and he made it exceeding clear that the old world and the old interests and amusements — the farm work and the

quarry work and the chapel teas and so on — had all took another place in his mind from what they did before the war. He didn't scorn nothing or laugh at anybody; yet there was the far-reaching change in him, and the home-staying people who saw and heard, felt it and knew that Amos had got to be a leader of men and one whose word did ought to be respected and obeyed. For that matter he had risen from private to sergeant in six months and the stripes was on his arm.

Nobody touched on the man's great misfortune, though it was common knowledge by now; and then by chance who should saunter into the bar, with his gun under his arm, but Jacob Warner, the keeper! And the people fairly held their breath, for Tom had already whispered them that the murder was out and Amos knew what had happened.

And then they saw a very remarkable scene.

"Hullo, Jacob, how's yourself?" asked Amos.

"I'm all right," answered the other, but he showed an inclination to be off and away that instant moment.

"Shake hands and don't you go. I want to speak to you," said Amos, and the other put a bold face on it and shook hands and set down his gun.

"Still shooting rabbits instead of Germans, I see," remarked Amos.

"The world's work can't stand still for the war," answered Jacob, lofty like.

"'The world's work'! Are you a rabbit yourself? What is the world's work *but* the war? You're so bad as the neutrals, who sit still and whimper and see their

ships sent to the bottom of the sea and bleat for peace, instead of giving the Allies a helping hand to win it. 'The world's work!' Much you know of the world's work, you hulking great zany."

Jacob stood three inches taller than Amos and was a broader, bigger, heavier man; but he looked a loose-built, shambling sort of figure against the soldier, and his voice hadn't the same clean ring in it, and his words didn't carry weight like the smaller man's, which was natural, because, of course, Jacob stood in the wrong and Amos had right behind him.

"What's the matter with you?" asked the keeper.

"I'll tell you," answered Amos. "The matter with me is that I've just heard my girl, in a passing fit of weak-mindedness, have thought that you was better like to suit her as a husband than what I shall. And that means that you've been messing about after her when you ought to have been doing your master's work. So you can't even be trusted to shoot rabbits seemingly. And now you're up against it, and I've got to knock this tomfoolery out of your head and out of hers afore I go to sleep tonight. And I'm going to do it."

"How?" asked Jacob. But he'd got his tail down already, and he knew by the other man's voice and straight eye that he was in for a bad time.

"I'll show you how. When you're a soldier, you learn to make up your mind double quick, for your life often hangs on it. And my life hangs on Lucy Vale for that matter, as the baggage very well knows. So now you drink your beer and come along with me."

"And if I don't?"

"There's no don't about it. I've had to handle your sort a dozen times under enemy's fire, Jacob Warner, and if I could do it there, I can do it here. You're dust to me — dust I tell you — in will and strength and everything. I'm ashamed to waste words on an over-grown, good-for-nothing lout like you. You've got to march along with me to Widow Vale's house and tell Lucy you've been a wicked young fool. And you can take off that cap and put on this German helmet. It came off the head of a braver man than you, so you needn't be ashamed of it."

Jacob threw his eyes around to find a friend; but of the dozen odd men in the bar at that minute, not one was his side. He blustered and cursed a good bit; but Amos was hard as a rock and, as Tom Chick said after, you felt he'd got a bit of the tiger-tamer in him at that moment and was good to handle man or beast. There weren't much of the tiger in Jacob Warner, whether or no, and before you could rub your eyes the battle of wills was over, and there stood the keeper with a dead German's helmet on his head.

"Shoulder arms!" said Amos, and Jacob had to put his gun over his shoulder, though he'd liked to have emptied both barrels into his enemy if he'd dared.

But he was a lost man afore the other, and there came a proper terrified look in his face as he went out and down the street. He pretended afterwards he thought Amos was mad. Barton let up a little then, and as we crowded to the door to see 'em go, we marked that he didn't drive the keeper in front of him, as if

he'd took a prisoner, but just walked in a friendly way by his side and talked as if there weren't a shadow between them. Leastways he did the talking, for Jacob was dumb.

Then they went to Widow Vale's cottage and it was Lucy's turn.

She came out to the door when Amos knocked, and before she knew it, was in his arms with a kiss on each cheek. Then he spoke afore she'd time to faint.

"Here I am, you see, never better, and in the pink, my dear. And I'm sorry to find that you and Jacob here have been playing at some sort of naughty pretence behind my back, like a couple of silly children. But I forgive you, because it's all make-believe here at home, and your letters are just as bad as you. But I've woke Jacob up, and he's come to say he's sorry for his sins; and I'll hope you'll forgive him as you'd wish to be forgiven yourself by me for such bad conduct. Now speak, Jacob, and then you can sling your hook."

He talked as calmly as ever; but the pair knew there was a force behind far beyond their power to cope with.

And Jacob cut a poor show before Lucy. He couldn't bluff and he couldn't talk big with a dead German's helmet on his head and a dozen school children peeping over the garden wall, so he did the wisest thing and threw up the sponge and felt least said, soonest mended.

"You hear Amos," said Jacob, "and that's all there is to it, Lucy. He's come home like a regiment of soldiers all in one man, and he will be obeyed and he

don't regard your engagement to me as binding and ——"

Lucy looked at him and then at Amos, standing there like the figure of Doom, and she saw the new power that had cast Jacob in the dust. For a moment she thought of putting her will against his, and perhaps if Jacob had put up a fight she'd have helped him; but seeing him down and out, as you may say, and the other so calm and resolute, she felt in a flash what a cruel mistake she'd made.

Then Amos took his helmet off Jacob's head and bade him be gone; but all quite pleasant without a spark of anger; and when the gamekeeper had disappeared, the steadfast soldier went into Lucy Vale's house. Her mother was out and they had it to themselves, and then she got a taste of the new Amos Barton. He listened to her shame-faced talk, like a father listens to a child caught out in a naughty deed, and he pardoned her, and then he said his say.

"I forgive you very willing, Lucy, but a thing like this have got to leave its mark, and 'tis no good your crying out, because I shouldn't hear you if you did. My ears don't take no account of much less than a 'Jack Johnson' nowadays. Jacob couldn't have been wicked if you hadn't helped him; and now you're going to catch it too."

She doted on his firmness and felt like kneeling down and kissing his boots by that time. But with all the will to pleasure him and the thankfulness to be forgiven, she was more than a bit shaken up when she heard what he said next.

"On Sunday next we'll go to chapel as usual, my dear, and sit side by side and sing out of the same book. And you'll wear this here helmet instead of your go-to-meeting hat. 'Tis an officer's helmet and will look very fine on your brave red hair. And that's not all neither. I've got a fortnight before I return to France. And during that fortnight two things will happen to me. I shall receive the Distinguished Conduct Medal, known as the D.C.M. for shortness, and I shall marry Lucy Vale. That's where we stand. And now you can give me a kiss and sit on my knee for a bit and tell me you feel thankful to God that you're going to marry a man after all."

He stopped with her for half an hour, and such was the potent force of him, and the look in his eyes, and the way he held her to him and rubbed his lean cheek against her round one, that Lucy never even argued about it. She'd not seen or felt such a driving power in her life, of course.

He went off to his relations presently and never even reminded Lucy about the helmet. But he let her choose the wedding day, and when he came to fetch her to worship the next Sunday she was wearing the helmet all right. But she'd softened it down with a bit of flimsy and he made no objection to that. In fact he never mentioned the subject again either then or ever after.

They were married so soon as possible, and then went to London for a few days, on one of which Amos visited Buckingham Palace and got his medal from His Majesty's own hand.

'Twas a nine days' wonder you may say, and, before he returned to fight, Tom Chick asked Amos how it came about that such an easy chap could take such a high hand and sweep others before him like the wind sweeps the leaves; and he said, as calm and gentle as ever, how it was.

"'Tis like this, Chick," he answered. "Out there, you must know, everything's so terrible real that it makes everyday life at St. Tid a dream by comparison. Out there all the senses play such a part as never before were they called to play. They're lifted up and increased, and you feel that you've only been half alive before. You hear and you see and you smell and you touch, and by God! you taste too, in a way you can't imagine if you haven't been there. Your feet turn into ice under you; your blood runs out of your ears and nose for nothing but the noise. Everything's in deadly extremes, Tom Chick; and after you've had a spell of it, you find you take a new view of life in general. And coming back from the front to all you peaceful people, and such mice as Jacob Warner, I feel that — no disrespect to you, Chick — you're all tame cats, or grown-up children, just fiddling on with your silly little lives and thinking your silly little thoughts and doing your silly little actions. And I was the same; but I shall never sink down into the same again if I'm spared to come through the fighting. And for the minute, being strung up as you may say to see things with the eyes of the Great War, 'twas nothing to me to handle Jacob as I did, and Lucy as I did. I've give 'em both a pinch of reality. And what's the result, my dear?

Why, that stupid gamekeeper if off to the wars himself, and a very fine soldier he'll make no doubt; while as for my precious girl, she understands a bit of the truth of me as she never did before; and when she married me, I got a wife in a thousand without a doubt, and she got a man as is a man I hope."

And if he's spared to the finish and takes up his Uncle Matthew's farm when the time comes, Amos Barton will be a power of good among us; for though the war's brought out his manhood, it haven't altered his nature, and he'll always be gentle to the weak and kind to the humble, and thoughtful for his fellow man and woman. Because he's built so.

THE END

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